

# MAN IN INDIA

---

---

VOL. 39 }

APRIL-JUNE 1959

{

NO. 2

---

ROBERT REDFIELD : ANTHROPOLOGIST

1897-1958

by MILTON SINGER

## I

**A**LTHOUGH most of his friends and colleagues knew he had been suffering from leukemia for several years, the death of Robert Redfield on October 16, 1958, brought a sense of shock and loss to them and to scholars and scientists throughout the world. A family man who spent most of his leisure at his ancestral home 'Windy Pines' outside Chicago, reading aloud or listening to music with his wife, children, grandchildren and a few close family friends, Robert Redfield nonetheless left behind very many who expressed in terms of affection what they felt about the qualities of his mind and spirit. In his appreciation of people, of ideas, and of what is best in human creativity and experience—and his willingness to speak up for these values—Redfield was a man rare in his time. The integrity of his character was expressed in the way he continued to write, to reason, and to serve throughout his fatal illness—and to listen and to talk well. Those who participated with him in seminars and conferences during those

---

Professor Milton Singer, a colleague of Robert Redfield in the Department Anthropology, is Paul Klapper Professor of Social Sciences in the University of Chicago.

years, like those who had known him earlier, were impressed with the incisive brilliance and rapid momentum of his mind.

Redfield's education and professional life centered around the University of Chicago, in whose schools he was educated. Originally trained for the law, he practiced briefly, but became interested in anthropology through a short trip to Mexico he and Mrs. Redfield made in 1923, and through the influence of the great sociologist Robert E. Park. He passed through the academic ranks to full Professor and finally Robert Maynard Hutchins Distinguished Service Professor, and had been Dean of his Division and Chairman of his Department as well as President of the American Anthropological Association. In 1954 and 1955, respectively, his colleagues in America and in Britain awarded to Mr. Redfield their recognition for scholarship and achievement in the anthropological profession : the Viking Fund Medal and the Huxley Memorial Medal.

Administrative duties, in addition to service on committees and commissions of nation-wide scope, the giving of expert advice in racial segregation cases, the tireless concern for education, and the trips he took to foreign countries for research, study and lectureships, never lessened his scholarly activity as an anthropologist or his production of works, each newly stimulating, written in a clear and adroit style which would in itself have singled him out.

Redfield himself came to believe that it was not possible to separate the man and the anthropologist within him. His abiding Socratic preoccupations with the nature of man and of the good life, with universal values and world views, with the integral forms of humanity as they present themselves in a person, a people, a nation, a civilization, did not predispose him to quantitative and microscopic techniques or to the use of physical science models. Yet he had a most scrupulous scientific mind which knew the value of theoretical construction and generalization and the importance of verifying such constructions by marshalling evidence that may be confirmed by others. He had in unusual degree humility before the facts and a willingness to confess himself wrong and begin over. His was a genuine inquiring mind, 'never sure of his success and

always doubtful of his program', only sure 'that freedom is both means and ends, that an inquiring and creative mind in any man is a good to enjoy and to defend.'

The dialectical play of Redfield's mind showed itself characteristically in some of the seminars he gave at the University of Chicago. One series of these, on 'human nature,' alternated with another on the 'comparison of cultures'. In the former series his main interest was to discover the common human, while in the latter it was in the distinctive differences of the ways of mankind. Of the two last papers he wrote in the Summer of 1958, one, for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, was on 'Man, Nature of (or) Human Nature'; the other, on 'Art and Icon,' intended as a lecture to be given at the Museum of Primitive Art in New York City, brilliantly balances the claims of a relativistic and ethnological approach to primitive art against those of a universal esthetic. Redfield was fond of quoting Robert Park's profound quip on Willian Graham Summer's dictum 'the mores can make anything right'—'But they have a harder time making some things right than others.'<sup>1</sup> Truth and understanding are advanced by an intellectual conversation in which there is a 'dialogue of opposites' carried on between seekers with different viewpoints or carried on within oneself.<sup>2</sup>

These qualities of the great scientist are evident in Redfield's contributions to anthropology, contained in a series of highly readable books. The most important of these are: *Tepoztlán, a Mexican Village: A Study of Folk Life*, 1930; *Chan Kom, a Maya Village* (with Alfonso Villa Rojas), 1934; *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, 1941; *A Village That Chose Progress*, 1950; *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*, 1953; *The Little Community*, 1955; and *Peasant Society and Culture*, 1956.

## II

Perhaps the most distinctive and pioneering of his scientific contributions is the one he made to our understanding of 'change in folklike peasant and tribal societies. This problem preoccupied him from the very beginning of his professional

career and remained throughout his life as one of the most creative growing points in his thinking and research.

When Redfield first became interested in peasant societies in the 1920's, they were not the fashionable subject of study they have since become. At that time sociologists, especially those around Chicago inspired by Robert Park, were beginning to study the city, and social anthropologists under the new inspiration of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown were undertaking functional field studies of relatively isolated tribal groups. The villages Redfield first undertook to study intensively, Tepoztlán and Chan Kom, belonged to neither of these types ; they were 'intermediate communities' with some of the characteristics of both the primitive tribe and the city. The fact that such intermediate communities resembled the peasant communities of Europe, the Near East, and the Orient, as Redfield noted in *Tepoztlán*, at once gave his studies a direct relevance to the life lived by the great majority of mankind. The particular kinds of change in these communities to which he directed attention, namely those stimulated by contact with modern western urban and industrial civilization, continue to be important today. Moreover his interest in studying these changes as 'an example within convenient limits, of the general type of change whereby primitive man becomes civilized man, the rustic becomes the urbanite' immediately linked his observations in contemporary communities to the generic processes of the human career.<sup>8</sup>

The method which Redfield developed for the study of the changing 'folk' societies and cultures represents both an expansion and a delimitation of the early studies of acculturation of tribal peoples to European civilization. It was an expansion in that it included under a single generic concept peasant as well as tribal peoples, and a delimitation in concentrating on the processes of change as they could be observed to happen. As carried out in the Yucatan studies the method consisted in an almost simultaneous comparison of four contemporary communities—a tribal village, a peasant village, a town, and a metropolitan city—within a single culture area.

These Yucatan studies adapted an essentially functional and synchronic approach to the study of social and cultural change. The main interest of the studies was neither in describing the surviving customs as they might be found from the comparison of the different communities, nor in inferring a relative temporal sequence of such customs from their relative spatial distribution. The interest was rather in 'the recurrent elements of a describable process,' in those general interrelations of social and cultural characteristics that could be closely correlated with the change from a tribal to a peasant village, from a town to a city.

The application of this method in Yucatan resulted in the conclusion that 'the changes in culture that in Yucatan appear to 'go along with' lessening isolation and homogeneity are seen to be chiefly three: disorganization of the culture, secularization, and individualization'. This conclusion Redfield reformulated in a more general form to take account of the Guatemalan material and of primitive societies; this more general formulation is that 'in the absence of a money economy isolated homogeneous societies tend to have well organized cultures and to be sacred and collectivistic', and that 'increase of contacts, bringing about heterogeneity and disorganization of culture, constitutes one sufficient cause of secularization and individualization.'<sup>4</sup>

Redfield's concepts of the 'folk society' and of a 'folk-urban continuum' find their chief significance in relation to this general formulation. They are not parts of an independent theory but simply constructions which enable one to ask questions about the degree of 'farness' associated with tribal, peasant, and urban societies and cultures. Redfield redefined the concepts of 'folk' 'primitive' in terms of degree of isolation, homogeneity, sacredness, and other characteristics. Such definitions are not, as some critics assume, assertions based on research findings. What is asserted, as in the above formulation concerning the effects of decreasing isolation, is that changes in some of the characteristics 'go along with' changes in others of the characteristics under specified condi-

tions. And such changes may be conceived as a change in social and cultural 'type'.

It is generally agreed that Redfield's generalizations about the transformations of tribal and peasant societies under modern urban influences hold for the series of Yucatan communities he and his associates studied. Indeed the meaning of the generalizations can only be adequately comprehended by reference to those studies. To what extent the generalizations hold for other communities is still an open question. Redfield himself did not assert the conclusions of the Yucatan studies in universal form. He offered them as hypotheses to guide further research and was quite prepared for the possibility that the correspondence he had found in Yucatan was limited by special circumstances, and 'that the association among some of the various characters is more necessarily close than among others, and that besides the long-isolated society with its attendant characters, on the one hand, and the isolated, heterogeneous society with its characters, on the other, we may recognize subtypes, or types in which various kinds of compromises or combinations of character are found.'<sup>5</sup>

Later research, by both Redfield and others, has qualified the Yucatan conclusions in just this manner, revealing special circumstances and new subtypes. Sol Tax's Guatemalan studies showed that the development of commerce and a money economy may have an effect similar to the increase in contacts in bringing about increased secularization and individualization.<sup>6</sup> Horace Miner's study of Timbuctoo showed that processes essentially similar to those in Yucatan can be traced in a non-western type of town.<sup>7</sup> Even Oscar Lewis's restudy of Tepoztlan, from which Lewis drew doubts of Redfield's folk-urban continuum, generally supports the Yucatan findings, as Lewis himself concludes :

'On the whole, many of our findings for Tepoztlan might be interpreted as confirming Redfield's more general finding for Yucatan, particularly in regard to the trend toward secularization and individualization, perhaps less so in regard to disorganization.'<sup>8</sup>

## III

The completion of the Yucatan studies did not dull Redfield's curiosity or creativity. In 1937 and again in 1939-40 he did field work in Guatemala, in 1948 he revisited Chan Kom, in 1948-49 he travelled to China, and in 1955 to India. From these trips came reports and new theoretical insights (in Redfield's writings the two are usually found together).<sup>9</sup> In the restudy of Chan Kom he was not content to draw further confirmation of his Yucatan conclusions, as he would have been justified in doing. Instead he tried to understand the changes that occurred in Chan Kom over seventeen years as 'the biography of a community, of a people who conceived a common purpose, and of what they did to realize it'. To understand social change in this way required that account be taken of the community's aspirations and mood, its policy and leadership, its ethos and balance sheet of success. It is probably this restudy which impressed upon Redfield the importance of finding a place for these intangibles in an anthropological theory of social and cultural change.<sup>10</sup>

One of the most significant qualifications of Redfield's earlier theory was one he himself added. This was the idea that in considering changes in peasant society and culture one should look not only to the stimulus of modern western civilization but to the indigenous non-western civilizations as well. For contemporary Yucatan, this may not be a very important consideration, since little remains of the indigenous high culture. For peasant communities in Europe, China, Japan, India, and the Middle East, however, the indigenous great traditions not only preceded modern influences but are still active and interact with the folk culture of the 'little communities' as well as with modern urban influences. In his later works, Redfield began to reconstruct his theory so as to take account of the long-established relations which peasant communities maintain with towns, cities and other communities within an indigenous civilization. This led him increasingly to consider the interrelations of different levels of social and cultural organization, manifest in special kinds of

networks, centers, and 'hinge groups' which mediate between them. The folk-urban polarity gives way to a more inclusive concept of a civilization as an enduring 'historic structure' in which little and great traditions, little and great communities, are in constant interaction.

In one respect, this later development is a return to the beginning. For even in the Tepoztlán study, it was already clear Redfield was not interested in changes going on in Tepoztlán for their own sake but as examples of generic processes. The roles of the two classes of professionals in Tepoztlán, e.g., *los tontos* and *los correctos*, as agents of traditionalism and agents of change, respectively, are prototypes of the later analysis of *literati* and *intelligentsia* in civilizational change.<sup>11</sup> The Yucatan studies similarly were undertaken to disclose in brief outline the process of civilization.<sup>12</sup> The difference is that in earlier studies the chief if not the sole method was the simultaneous comparison of discrete communities, whereas in his later thinking about civilizations Redfield sees a greater need for the methods and time perspectives of the archeologist and the historian. The earlier side-by-side comparison will continue 'but we shall also develop schemes of comparison that put together in the same class those societies and cultures that have corresponding positions in the same civilizational system or perhaps in different civilizational systems.'<sup>13</sup> This new kind of comparisons will exhibit the ordering of peoples into tribal, peasant, and urban in its third dimension, history.

'And when now we come to study by direct observation the conversion of tribal peoples into peasantry in India, or the passage from peasant life to town life in some Latin-American country, we find we are studying social change from one level to another in a great historical system. The generality of the change derives from our understanding of this historic system.'<sup>14</sup>

This view of civilizations as great structures in history, as 'systems of cultures in persisting characteristic relationship' was very much on Redfield's mind to the end. During the last ten years he was actively concerned with the problem of how to characterize and compare the great civilizations and sought

the help of orientalists, philosophers, and other scholars of civilizations.<sup>15</sup> He found suggestion and stimulus in A. L. Kroeber's works, in Toynbee's *Study of History*, in recent anthropological research in India, but he believed that the main problems of concept and method were just beginning to be clarified. His own contributions to the comparative study of civilizations are to be found in *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*, in *Peasant Society and Culture*, and in several articles and lectures.<sup>16</sup> All these he regarded of tentative and exploratory. In a personal letter dated September 13th (1958), he speaks of his intention 'to write a small book on Civilizations....It would consist of perhaps ten essay-like chapters, something like—but in the end probably like—the following :

- I. A Civilization as an Object (a formed thing of the mind)
- II. Culture and Civilizations : Class and Subclass
- III. Criteria (class and continua)
- IV. Structures in History (Societal or Cultural)
- V. Community, Region, Class, Estate
- VI. The Cultivation of Tradition and Self-Image : Knowledge
- VII. The Cultivation of Esthetic Discrimination
- VIII. The Cultivation of Moral Judgment
- IX. The Creativity of the Civilized
- X. The Civilization of the untraditional'

What might have gone into this book we can only guess from Redfield's latest articles and lectures. For most of us it will remain an ideal in just that special meaning which Robert Redfield's life, work, and words give to this term :

'An ideal is a picture of the place you will never quite, but always strive to reach. Its attainment happens in little pieces of the striving. We shall never have a world of perfectly rational and fair-minded men, just as we shall never have an educational system in which everyone learns to think with the excellences of intellectual conversation that I have imagined. But the great good is contained within the small ;

the civilization of the dialogue is set forth, however humbly, in any one small piece of honest intellectual exchange, with my neighbor, with my book. A new beginning toward the unattainable is forever right at hand.'<sup>17</sup>

## REFERENCES

1. Robert Redfield, 'The Universally Human and the Culturally Variable' (*The Journal of General Education*, Vol. X (1957), No. 3 : 150-60), pp. 159-160.
2. Robert Redfield, *The Little Community* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1955), Chapter IX.
3. Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlán, a Mexican Village : A Study of Folk Life* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 13-14.
4. Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 339, 369.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
6. Sol Tax, 'Culture and Civilization in Guatemalan Societies' (*Scientific Monthly*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 5 : 463-7), and 'World View and Social Relations in Guatemala' (*American Anthropologist*, Vol. 43 (1941), No. 1 : 27-42).
7. Horace Miner, *The Primitive City of Timbuctoo* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1953).
8. Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village : Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1951), p. 440. See also Horace Miner, 'The Folk-Urban Continuum' (*American Sociological Review*, Vol. 17 : 529-37).
9. Robert Redfield, 'Primitive Merchants of Guatemala' (*Quarterly Journal of Inter-American Relations*, Vol. 1 (1939), No. 4 : 42-56) ; 'Culture and Education in the Midwestern Highlands of Guatemala' (*American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLVII (1943), No. 6 : 640-48) ; 'The Relations Between Indians and Ladinos in Agua Escondida, Guatemala' (*America Indigena*, Vol. XVI (1956), No. 4 : 253-76) ; Introduction to *China's Gentry : Essays in Rural-Urban Relations*, by Hsiao-Tung Fei, revised and edited by Margaret Park Redfield (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1953) ; 'Community Studies in China and Japan : A Symposium. Introduction' (*Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. XIV (1954), pp. 3-10).
10. Robert Redfield, *The Little Community*, Chapter VI ; see also 'Values in Action : A Comment' (*Human Organization*, Vol. 17 (1958), No. 1 : 20-22).
11. Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlán*, pp. 218-23 ; *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (Ithaca, N. Y. : Cornell University Press, 1953), pp. 42-44 ; also 'The Cultural Role of Cities,' with Milton Singer (*Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 3 (1954), No. 1 : 53073).

12. Robert Redfield, 'The Maya and Modern Civilization' (*Scientific Monthly*, Vol. XXXVII (1933), 110-123).
13. Robert Redfield, 'Societies and Cultures as Natural Systems' (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 85 (1955), Parts I and II : 19-32), p. 29.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 31 ; see also 'Social and Cultural Change' (lecture given at the University of Chicago in December, 1957 ; hectographed).
15. The series *Comparative Studies of Cultures and Civilizations*, edited by Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, includes the following volumes, all published by the University of Chicago Press : Arthur F. Wright, Ed., *Studies in Chinese Thought* ; Harry Hoijer, Ed., *Language in Culture* ; Robert Redfield, *The Little Community* ; McKim Marriott, Ed., *Village India* ; G. E. von Grunebaum, Ed., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization* ; John K. Fairbank, Ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions*. Two volumes of the series were published only as Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association : G. E. von Grunebaum, Ed., *Studies in Islamic Cultural History*, and G. E. von Grunebaum, *Islam : Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition*. See also Milton Singer, Ed., *Traditional India : Structure and Change* (*Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. LXXI, No. 281 (July-September, 1958) ; Vol. X of 'Bibliographical and Special Series of American Folklore Society'). A grant from the Ford Foundation aided this program of publication and research in Comparative Civilizations.
16. 'The Social Organization of Tradition' (*Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. XV (1955), No. 1 : 13-21) ; 'Societies and Cultures as Natural Systems' (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 85 (1955), Parts I and II : 19-32) ; 'Thinking About a Civilization,' in Milton Singer, Ed., *Introducing India in Liberal Education* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1957) ; 'Civilizations as Cultural Structures.' 'Civilizations as Societal Structures ? The Development of Community Studies,' and 'Civilizations as Things Thought About' (lectures given at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, California, 1958) ; 'Thinker and Intellectual in Primitive Society' (to be included in the forthcoming volume of essays in honor of Paul Radin, published by the Columbia University Press) ; and an article on 'Civilization' in the forthcoming edition of Collier's Encyclopedia.
17. Robert Redfield, *The Educational Experience* (The Redfield Lectures, published by the Fund for Adult Education, Pasadena, California, 1955, 61 pp.), pp. 39-40.

# INTERACTIONAL AND ATTRIBUTIONAL THEORIES OF CASTE RANKING<sup>1</sup>

by MCKIM MARRIOTT

**E**XISTING theory of caste rank is proving inadequate for interpreting the results of recent field studies in South Asia. I shall here discuss some evident inadequacies of the present attributional theory, then outline a new, interactional theory of caste rank, and finally consider how these two theories can be reconciled.

## *Attributional Theory*

Present theory about Hindu caste rank runs strongly to the view that a caste's rank is determined by its behavior or attributes. A caste is said to be considered high if its characteristic way of life is judged to be high and pure, or low if its way of life is judged to be low and polluted. Highness and lowness—purity and impurity of attributes—are said to be measured by certain criteria which constitute or imply a scale of Hindu ritual values.

A substantially similar theory of caste ranking begins at least as long ago as the Brahmanical texts of dharmashastra. Manu, for example, in Book X, prescribes the proper behavior for persons of each of the four ranked varnas, and then explains how a deviation from these prescribed ways of life will cause a rise or fall in rank, according to the direction of the deviation. The significant prescriptions in Manu's code and in other Hindu books of law emphasize purity of occupation, diet, marriage, and performance of sacrifices.

---

<sup>1</sup> Expanded version of a paper read at the 57th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D. C., Nov. 21, 1958.

Mr. McKim Marriot is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Social Sciences, University of Chicago. His work in India was carried on in a Western U. P. village and in the historical city of Wai in Maharashtra. He also edited *Village India* (University of Chicago Press, 1955).

This ancient and influential theory of caste ranking has seen little change in two thousand years : it reappears in a prize essay of 1953 in a paper by H. N. C. Stevenson, titled 'Status evaluation in the Hindu caste system'. Stevenson quotes Manu and a great many more recent authorities as supporting the theory that 'group ritual status.....is evaluated on the basis of (a) the observance of certain standards of behaviour, mainly concerning occupation, diet and marriage, by reference to the Pollution Concept ; (b) the right to perform certain rites...' (p. 64). Human emissions, death, killing, especially killing cows, and alcohol are listed as polluting ; wearing of the sacred thread, use of a high varna identification, etc., are listed as elevating attributes. A generally similar, attributional theory of caste has been accepted for some years by Western sociologists (e. g., Davis 1949: 382) and an analogous theory of social class in the United States is now common (Parsons 1940 ; Davis 1942).

To some extent, the attributional theory of caste ranking has found its way even into recent field reports. M. N. Srinivas, writing of a Mysore village in 1955, puts the attributional theory cautiously. He writes 'there is a hierarchy in diet and occupation to which the caste hierarchy is related' (p. 20). He says that vegetarianism is generally regarded as purer than meat eating, while abstinence is higher than toddy-drinking. He presents a ranked ordering of meats and an approximate ordering of occupations from pure to impure. Srinivas does not quite say that caste rank is determined by diet and occupation. However, when he puts forth the theory that castes raise their rank by 'Sanskritizing' their customs, that is, by changing their diet and occupation so as to resemble purer, Brahman ways—then he comes very close to espousing an attributional theory of caste rank. I say 'close to' by way of qualification, because Srinivas usually inserts the qualifier 'attempt' before the verb 'to raise' when describing this phenomenon. Actually, both of the attempts reported by Srinivas—the Smiths' and the Toddymen's—were failures. There is an implication, nevertheless, that caste customs do determine caste rank, at least usually or in the

long run. This would be the attributional theory of caste rank and caste mobility.

But there seem to be many serious difficulties in applying any such attributional theory to any specific village caste hierarchy. Srinivas takes note of some of these difficulties. The greatest difficulty is that the presumed hierarchy of values in matters of diet, occupation, etc., does not correlate well with the observed order of caste standing. In the Mysore village studied by Srinivas, the vegetarian Trader caste, which should stand highest by reference to its diet and work, actually ranks beneath the meat-eating Peasant and Shepherd castes. In the same village, some castes which pursue pure occupations—the Basketmaker and Potter castes—are ranked below other castes which pursue polluting occupations. The Smiths whose Brahman varna identification and wearing of the sacred thread should raise them to high rank according to attributional logic are actually despised by many for their pretensions. An attributional theory of caste rank based on Brahmanical ideas of pollution and purity can explain such anomalies only by assuming great time lags between the possession of an attribute and its effect upon rank.

Srinivas avoids these anomalies by resorting to two supplementary theories of ranking both of which may be recognized as interactional theories : (a) a power theory of 'dominance', which holds that local caste strength affects rank regardless of attributes ; and (b) an associational theory, possibly circular in this context, which holds that some attributes are evaluated, not in themselves, but according to the otherwise determined rank of the castes which exhibit them. 'The tapping and sale of toddy are low occupations because only low castes drink toddy' (p. 21).

A second large difficulty in attempting an attributional analysis of caste rank is the lack of an adequate explanation for the apparently different effects of occupational and non-occupational attributes. An allegedly polluting item of behavior, such as washing clothes or killing goats, does not pollute every caste in which the behavior is common. In South India, members of most castes do wash clothes for themselves

and kill goats for their own consumption. Yet the pollution of such behavior attaches only to the Washerman and Butcher castes whose members do washing and killing as businesses. To say that occupational pollution is corporate while non-occupational pollution is individual restates the facts, but does not explain them. An explanation of this distinction does not seem possible in attributional terms alone. The difficulty here is large because so many of the attributes alleged to determine differences of caste rank—sweeping, contact with leather, removal of hair or feces, etc.—are universally distributed in all castes.

A third unsolved problem of attributional theory is the lack of an explanation as to how the various kinds of polluting behavior are compared with each other or combined in one hierarchy of values. Which criteria are more important, those of diet or those of occupation? Is a vegetarian caste which practices a polluting occupation to be regarded as lower or as higher than a non-vegetarian caste which practices a pure occupation? Which occupation is lowest—butchering goats, cutting hair, or tapping toddy? The many kinds of polluting or otherwise lowering behavior seem to be incommensurable: they do not readily form one scale of values by which caste rank could be measured in detail. Nevertheless, castes are often ranked with some precision, which suggests that the logic of ranking is not simply attributional.

Finally, attributional theory has so far given no explanation as to how a large number of discriminations of rank can be made among castes which possess similar corporate attributes. In the Mysore village, Srinivas distinguishes five rank levels among five castes all of whom have the same dietary and all of whom practice occupations of approximately equal pollution (Peasant, Oilman, Washerman, Barber, Toddyman). In Bisipara, the Orissan village studied by Bailey (1955), attributional discriminations of caste rank would be still more difficult to make, for the major dietary distinction of vegetarian/non-vegetarian is absent: all twenty-one castes, including Brahmins, presently kill and eat goats. There are not enough differences of attributes to explain the discrimi-

nations of caste rank that are actually made by villagers. Attributional theory seems incomplete, at best.

Apart from these difficulties of theory, attributional analysis has been notably deficient in method and fact. Up to now, there has been no very convincing proof that villagers anywhere do decide about caste ranks primarily by reference to behavioral attributes, or even that they evaluate the supposedly determinant attributes as this theory assumes them to. There has been a tendency in field reports to mix great-traditional precepts with village examples, to work deductively from the books of dharmashastra rather than inductively from the concepts held by live villagers. And there has yet to be published a systematic application of attributional theory to any specific village hierarchy, excepting the critical discussion of a Mysore village by Srinivas, whose results I take to be inconclusive. Having named these difficulties, I here end this account of the attributional theory of caste rank. Possibly these difficulties can be overcome without departure from the theory itself, but I suspect that they cannot.

### *Interactional Theory*

Quite a different theory of caste ranking—an interactional theory—is suggested especially by recent studies of villages in northern and middle India (Bailey 1957: 188-191; Marriott 1952; Mayer 1956), and by descriptions of feeding relationships elsewhere (Dube 1955a : 34-44 ; 1955b). It is also partly implied in the concept of 'dominance' used by Srinivas (1955a, 1955b) and others in analyzing intercaste relations in South India. By an interactional theory, I mean one which holds that castes are ranked according to the structure of interaction among them.

In the village of Kishan Garhi in Aligarh district, U. P., on which I can report<sup>2</sup>, 2 villagers base their opinions of caste rank primarily and explicitly on ritual interactions of two principal kinds : the ritualized giving and receiving of food,

---

\* Field work (March 1951-April 1952) was supported by an Area Research Training Fellowship grant from the Social Science Research Council.

and the giving and receiving of ritual services. As between these two kinds of interaction, food transfers are the more decisive for establishing rank. Attributional evaluations are also heard, but these are secondary and tend to be used flexibly as rationalizations for whatever ranking is first determined by food and service exchanges. When comparisons must be made, or when arguments arise over relative caste standing, decisions go according to actual positions in the hierarchy of ritual interactions. Emphasis in this system of ranking is not on qualities, but on transactions ; not on purity, but on *purification*. Adrian Mayer writes in similar terms of his Malwa village : 'The manifestation of different caste status lies in the activities [i.e., interactions] in which the castes engage, rather than in any symbols [attributes].....'(1956 :120).

In Kishan Garhi, as villagers explain their system, that caste must be regarded as higher which receives the greater amount of ritual honoring and purification from others while giving the lesser amount of these in return. 'The Brahman caste is the highest because all other castes worship it.' The amount of honoring can be measured most incontrovertibly by reference to the fine distinctions in food transfer. Foods are classified by village usage into five major categories, ranked as follows in order of honor and purity from high to low : (a) no food ; (b) raw foodstuffs—the food of gifts ; (c) superior cooked food (*pakki*)—the food of feasts ; (d) inferior cooked food (*kachchi*)—daily bread, the food of wage-payment ; and (e) garbage or leavings from plates. Foods of all five categories are dealt with by villagers of all castes ; they do not constitute attributional differences of diet.

Givings and receivings of foods of these five types of interaction with persons of other castes create for each caste a lengthy index of relative caste standing. For example, Brahmins give garbage to the lowest castes and accept no food in return ; they give inferior cooked food to all low and some high castes, while receiving in return either no food, raw foodstuffs, or superior cooked food in ascending order according to the caste of the giver. They need give foods of the two highest categories to no other caste, and

accept foods of the two lowest categories from no other caste. Brahmans thus stand clearly at the top of the local caste order of interaction in food. Lower castes follow along behind. They give more honorific foods to the castes above them and receive honorific ones, while not being able to give the lower, pollution-bearing foods to so many castes below themselves. Such patterns of food transfer define five ranked blocs of castes very clearly, and five subdivisions of these blocs. Often viewed by attributional theorists as merely negative 'restrictions' or 'taboos' against caste interaction (Blunt 1931 : 87-94 ; Hutton 1946 : 62-67), these food patterns appear in Kishan Garhi as positive relational devices. Indeed, the circulation of food constitutes the life's blood of caste rank.

The ritual services which are significant for caste ranking remove pollution, bestow purity, or show honor and deference. They are 'ritual' in the sense that they have sacred value and in the sense that they follow the forms of worship. Priesthood, barbering, begging, laundering, sweeping, and many other village services are ritual services, while agricultural labor is not. Ritual services are intimately connected with the food hierarchy since they are paid for partly in food and since many of them are rendered especially on occasions of feasting. A caste is higher if it receives more ritual services, or ritual services of higher types from other castes ; it is lower if it gives more ritual services, or gives them to lower castes.

By such interactional analysis, the distinction between effects of occupational and non-occupational behavior is explained. An occupation is a kind of behavior rendered as a service by one caste for another caste. The servant gives away honor or purification, (thus raising his master's caste's rank) ; he takes on pollution or otherwise demonstrates his inferiority by the service, thus lowering his own caste's rank. The same behavior rendered non-occupationally on one's own behalf or for a fellow casteman involves no inter-caste action and thus adds no pollution or subordination to the performer's caste. Pollution in an interactional hierarchy is not innate, but always social, always a matter of giving and taking, of adding and subtracting.

Services combine with food transfers in Kishan Garhi to form one fairly consistent and highly differentiated network of concrete interactions. The logics of interactive ranking resemble the logics of geometry and arithmetic as applied to a stratified network. Discriminations of rank are made positionally, either directly by looking at my caste's interactions with another caste, or indirectly by looking at a third caste's relations with my caste and others. Quantitative computations are also commonly made by villagers, as when a man reckons that caste X is higher than caste Y because caste Y gives its ritual services to more other castes than does caste X.

The way to gain or maintain higher rank is to secure dominance in the system of ritual interactions. Ritual dominance is most commonly secured by using wealth or power respectively to purchase or command higher positions in feasting, or more honorific and purifying services from other castes. Moneylending and control of land rights seem to provide the most effective levers of securing higher rank in Kishan Garhi at the present day. Money and land do not directly affect caste standing since their possession does not in itself constitute a ritual fact. They become effective for ranking purposes only when and if the influence they yield can be translated into those ritual interactions which are significant for rank. Application of wealth is the classic technique of the Vaishya while application of power is that of the Kshatriya varna. In Kishan Garhi, ten of the twenty-four castes identify themselves with one of these two varnas under the labels 'Rajput', 'Thakur', 'Baniya', etc., and strive for rank by the appropriate means. At least two local castes, Farmer and Goatherd (Jat and Gadariya), not only use such varna titles, but are known to have moved perceptibly upward along the Kshatriya path.

Striving for ritual dominance is also possible by purveying more desirable, purifying, or honorific services along the classic path of the Shudra varna : finer ritual services rendered to still higher castes bring not only material, but also ritual rewards. In Kishan Garhi, the Barber, Tailor, Potter, and Cotton-Carder castes have been actively striving along this path.

Along such interactive paths, a gain of rank cannot usually be accomplished by a mere change in a caste's way of life. A caste of persons who eat goat meat and chicken, drink liquor, and engage in hunting may be assigned, without change in any of these customs, either to a very low or to a very high caste rank. Choice in the assignment depends on how much ritual honor and deference the caste can command, while this in turn usually depends on the amount of land or other wealth which the caste possesses, or on the services which it offers for hire.

But there is one negative technique as well as these several positive techniques for securing rank in an interactive system : a caste may choose to concentrate on extricating itself from subordinate positions in ritual interaction. Subordinate positions usually require accepting foods and priestly ministrations from some castes while rendering ritual services to other castes. Withdrawal from such positions often requires the establishment of new substitute services, sometimes including a new priesthood, either within the caste group or outside the village. This is the familiar climbing technique of the would-be Brahman, quasi-Brahman, ascetic, or devotee castes, and also of many untouchable castes who despair of improving their standing by any other means. If not carried so far that it endangers income, withdrawal from low positions in interaction may be an inexpensive technique for improving caste rank, a technique likely to appeal especially to castes which lack sufficient resources of wealth or power to attempt the classic strategy of the Kshatriya or Vaishya.

If such a caste were to withdraw completely from its lowering positions, would it not then cease to be part of an interactional system of rank ? A caste lacking ritual interactions with other castes could be ranked only by evaluating its symbolic attributes. An interactional analysis would here seem forced to give way to an attributional analysis of caste mobility. Even so, when it occurs in actuality, a withdrawal from ritual interaction is readily interpreted as a negation of the subordinative effects of the system, as an attempted outflanking of the marshalled ranks of interacting castes. Furthermore, complete withdrawal from ritual interaction seems extremely

rare, and would be painful if not impossible for most castes. The four Brahman and Brahman-like castes of Kishan Garhi all take care to maintain at least some elevating types of ritual interaction with other castes : they may cease rendering certain services to others, but do not give up hiring the services of others for themselves. The attributes which they exhibit are thus still interpreted by other castes with reference to many interactional clues. Not even Brahman and untouchable ranks can then be considered attributional alone, although they constitute the poles of the interactional system.

An interactional theory of caste rank here leads to a distinctive conception of the four varnas. As the terms are used in interaction today in Kishan Garhi, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra need not be understood in the attributional sense as four ranked ways of life, imposing a narrow conformity of manners upon the ambitious caste. Instead, the four varnas may be seen as parallel paths of life, as alternative permissible styles of honorable living. Power—spiritual and physical—wealth, and skill are complementary values. Their combined existence indicates not the narrowness but the latitude of caste hierarchy. These four terms, plus the fifth untouchable designation, label varied possible approaches to an interactive caste hierarchy through techniques of buying and selling, commanding and withdrawing. Many paths—varnas, ways of life, techniques—lead from low to high. Along any one path there are castes of varied, interactionally determined rank. In Kishan Garhi a ‘Brahman,’ vegetarian wearer-of-sacred-thread may be Priest, Florist, or Carpenter by caste. A meat-eating ‘Kshatriya’ may be a landlord Farmer, a Butcher, or a Sweeper. Identification with a varna tells which ladder a caste is on, not which rung of the ladder.

### *Discussion*

I have thus far outlined two quite different theories of caste ranking and illustrated them particularly as they apply to villages in two distant regions of India, Mysore in the South and western Uttar Pradesh in the North. Perhaps I should simply conclude with the hypothesis that (1) South Indian caste

ranking may be more attributional, while North Indian ranking may be more interactional. South India, with its layers of immigrant upon indigenous culture and its sharper social separations between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, and among other sectarian and regional groupings, may more suitably employ an idiom of ranking which works less by the structure of interaction, more by differential evaluation of distinctive cultural attributes. The South is the place where one sees most developed the outward signs of ritual privilege, badges of rank, sumptuary laws, and the like. On the other hand, the culturally more homogeneous North, in its socially less divided and more compact village settlements, may more easily employ an interactional idiom of ranking. If there are few differences of attributes, then interaction must provide the bases of distinction, if any.

This first hypothesis thus has some facts to recommend it. I suspect, however, that thorough interactional analysis would be as successful in the South as in the North, and might resolve some of the difficulties of attributional analysis noted previously. At present the facts are not sufficient for deciding, since interactional theory has yet to be rigorously applied to any southern hierarchy.

A second hypothesis as to the possibly separate spheres of these two theories has already been suggested in an example. This is the hypothesis that (2) attributional analysis may be more applicable to Brahman and untouchable castes, these castes being associated with the absolutely pure and the absolutely impure cultural values and symbols, and being most inclined to use the technique of withdrawal from interaction. Between these poles of pure and impure, the other castes—those oriented toward Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra values—would take their places by reference to the interactive ritual idiom whose use is contingent upon differences of power, wealth and skill.

If an attributional theory of caste ranking better represents the orientation of Brahman and untouchable castes, then we have a hint as to the reason for the previous adherence of Western scholars to an attributional theory. Westerners in the past century tended to focus much attention on these two

extreme and obvious categories within Indian society. Scholars were much interested in Brahmins as the custodians of India's high culture, while missionaries and reformers were much concerned with the plight of untouchables. Indeed, the interests of Indian scholars and reformers might be typified in much the same way. Furthermore, scholarly understanding of Indian caste has been and still is importantly guided by experts in Brahmanical texts and by social theorists who themselves have originated in castes of Brahman varna.

But when I suggest that attributional theory is relatively 'more applicable' to Brahmins and untouchables than to other castes, I do not mean to abandon the opinion stated below that interactional analysis may offer more complete understanding of the ranking of all castes, Brahmins and untouchables included.

One might press this hypothetical analysis still further by anticipating those different general conditions under which attributional or interactional ranking would tend to flourish. Attributional ranking would seem more favored by situations in which there is greater cultural heterogeneity and less intimate social interaction among caste groups. (3) One would therefore expect attributional device to have greater play in establishing at least the initial expectation as to rank among separate peoples, such as tribes, or among castes belonging originally to different regional societies, and (4) among the mutually less acquainted caste groups of cities. Anonymous urban society seems inevitably to judge most things by outward behavior, by appearances, by attributes. Conversely, interactional ranking would seem likely to develop and maintain itself best in situations of cultural homogeneity and intimate mutual acquaintance among groups. Thus it should be found generally in stable, small rural localities. Hypotheses (3) and (4), which deal with marginal situations in which the interactional bases of ranking could scarcely be present, seem likely to prove true.

Interactional ranking, as already noted, presupposes a close knowledge of local interactive ritual idioms and of actual past behavior among local groups. Something like the hierarchy of food and service exchanges which I have described from

Kishan Garhi may be found in much of northern India, I believe, with numerous local variations. But other regions may rely much more on the linkages of hypergamous marriage, or precedence in temple ceremonies, or other kinds of ritual interaction as bases for judgment as to caste ranking (Marriott 1959). Interactional analysis then simply cannot escape the necessity of detailed local knowledge.

By contrast, attributional analysis as it has been practiced so far seems able to get along on generalities derived from Brahmanical texts, plus relatively superficial observation of local group characteristics. Groups have merely to be classified within preordained categories. (5) Attributional analysis will tend to be more readily used, therefore, by persons who are not only urban, but also educated—who are strangers to the small community. Interactional ranking is more to be expected as the logic of untutored, untravelled villagers. The Western or Western-educated, urban social scientist in India may in this respect be as prone to prefer attributional analysis as is the Brahmanically educated, traditional Indian scholar. For the scholar of Western type, an added educational factor favoring attributional analysis would be his greater familiarity with the analogous attributional evaluations of social rank which are common in Western class society and in Western social theory.

If attributional theory serves the needs of urban educated persons for a quick understanding of any village caste structure, it serves them easily also as a rough description of (6) all-Indian caste ranking in general. Inaccurate as it may be and untrue to the nature of village thought, attributional theory offers an approximation to general truth which is at least more accessible than knowledge of the details of ritual interaction in hundreds of thousands of villages. Only highly particularized, intensive studies can divulge the workings of caste hierarchies as interactive systems; only laborious comparison can construct from these an accurate and intelligible general picture.

Moreover, as urbanization, education, geographic mobility, and the influence of Brahmanical and Western social ideologies

spread, interactional ranking may be expected to give way increasingly to an actual spread of attributional ranking. This probability contains an unfortunate consequence for scientific understanding: interactional ranking will become increasingly difficult to find and to study.

If attributional ranking is tending to spread at the expense of interactional ranking, then we should expect an increase also in the attributional phenomenon of attempted upward mobility by means of Sanskritization. Srinivas (1956) notes that Sanskritization goes on at intensified pace today, and that it need not be thought of as standing in opposition to Westernization. What the present analysis emphasizes is that mobility by Sanskritization must essentially depend upon the effect of Westernization and any related forces which tend toward the creation of national community. A mere brandishing of Brahmanical symbols by a well-known village group can scarcely hope to impress a village audience in its own parochial terms, for if the present analysis is correct, villagers must refer questions of caste rank to their objective knowledge of daily interaction. A gesturing with attributes which would be regarded as spurious in the immediate village context may take on some significance, however, if it is understood as a performance intended for the eyes and tastes of that newly generalized all-Indian audience, partly in and partly beyond the village, which modern politics and communications are helping universally to extend. Examined in detail, many instances of attempted upward caste mobility by Sanskritization which have been discussed recently involve leaders or groups having wide and often urban connections outside the village. There are Coorgs of military fame (Srinivas 1952), untouchables led by schoolmasters, college students, industrial laborers, or policemen (Cohn 1955, 1958; Bailey 1957 : 271-227), a distiller caste with old trading ties (Bailey 1957 : 186-198), and so on. The drama of Sanskritization is played on many a village stage, but the script may be written elsewhere, the star performers are often a travelling company, and the critics represent a greater and growing public.

There is one final possibility of which I cannot completely

dispose : this is the possibility that what I have called 'attributional' and 'interactional', and attempted to discuss as two opposite types, may be understood better as two aspects of the same thing, related to each other somewhat as are the terms 'culture' and 'social structure' or 'idea' and 'action.' I do not believe that attributional and interactional ranking are only so related ; I presume that each of these terms stands for an alternative way of both thinking and acting. Although the two may occur together within a given group of people, each has peculiar reference to social relations of a distinctive type—interactional to social relations in the little community, attributional to those in the great community (Redfield 1956 : 35-66).

The results of intensive field studies may help to clarify this and the other issues of comparison between interactional and attributional ranking. But even if we suspect that interactional ranking is merely the obverse face of the familiar coin which we know as attributional ranking, I think it is now high time for us to turn the old coin over and have a look at its other side.

#### REFERENCES CITED

- Bailey, F. C. 1957 *Caste and the Economic Frontier*. Manchester, University of Manchester Press.
- Blunt, E. A. H. 1931 *The Caste System of Northern India*. London, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press.
- Cohn, Bernard S. 1955 *The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste*. In McKim Marriott, ed., *Village India*, pp. 53-77. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- 1958 *Changing Traditions of a Low Caste*. In Milton Singer, ed., *Traditional India : Structure and Change*. *Journal of American Folklore* 71 : 413-421. Bloomington, Indiana.
- Davis, Kingsley 1942 *A Conceptual Analysis of Stratification*. *American Sociological Review* 7 : 309-322.
- 1949 *Human Society*. New York, Macmillan.
- Dube, S. C. 1955a *Indian Village*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- 1955b *Ranking of Castes in Telengana Villages*. *Eastern Anthropologist* 8 : 182-190. Lucknow.
- Hutton, J. H. 1946 *Caste in India*. Cambridge, University Press.

- Marriott, McKim 1952 Social Structure and Change in a U. P. Village. *Economic Weekly* 4 : 869-874. Bombay.
- 1957 A Technique for the Study of Caste Ranking. Paper read at the Chicago meeting of the American Anthropological Association.
- 1959 Caste Ranking and Community Structure in Five Regions of India and Pakistan. *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute*. (Forthcoming) Poona.
- Mayer, Adrian, C. 1958 Some Hierarchical Aspects of Caste. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 12 : 117-144. Albuquerque.
- Parsons, Talcott 1940 An Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification. *American Journal of Sociology* 45 : 841-862. Chicago.
- Redfield, Robert 1956 Peasant Culture and Society. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Srinivas, M. N. 1955a Introduction. In *India's Villages*. Calcutta, Development Department, West Bengal.
- 1955b The Social System of a Mysore Village. In McKim Marriott, ed., *Village India*, pp. 1-35. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- 1956 A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization. *Far Eastern Quarterly* 15 : 481-496. Ann Arbor.
- Stevenson, H. N. C. 1953 Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 84 : 45-65. London.

## A TRIBE IN SEARCH OF A GREAT TRADITION : THE EMULATION-SOLIDARITY CONFLICT

by MARTIN ORANS

**M.** N. SRINIVAS maintains that mobility has long been possible within the caste system, and that castes have risen by emulating high caste behavior and high caste restraints such as vegetarianism and teetotalism. In his view this emulating process of Sanskritization has served to increase cultural uniformity within regional caste hierarchies and over the length and breadth of India (Srinivas 1952 : 212-227). I suggest that efforts at caste mobility may also serve to maintain or increase cultural diversity.

Since I will illustrate this diversifying effect with observations and historical accounts of the tribal people of the Chotanagpur plateau area, I should note that these non-Hindu tribes are also castes, i.e., they are endogamous groups, known as 'jati', 'castes'. They carry on important economic and social interaction with other castes, and are ranked and rankers within regional caste hierarchies.

Whether or not a caste may rise simply by emulating high caste behavior, many castes regard an increase in political and economic power as necessary to attain a higher status. But political and economic power may require the maintenance or even intensification of caste solidarity, and solidarity for a caste or group of castes may require the maintenance or intensification of distinctive beliefs and practices. Such distinctive characteristics may be seized upon as symbols of group solidarity. Those characteristics which are most abhorred by high castes and most un-Sanskritic may well serve as ideal

---

Mr. Martin Orans is a teacher of anthropology at the University of Washington, Seattle. He has done research on the Santals and their adaptation to work in an industrial situation, Jamshedpur. The present paper was read at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, 1958.

solidarity symbols, particularly in a political struggle portrayed in terms of high and low caste opposition. Moreover, the preservation or intensification of boundary-marking caste symbols may be necessary not only to maintain joint interests but also to prevent segments of a caste from attaining a higher status by emulation and claims of membership in higher castes.

Such caste jumping by segments has occurred a number of times. By the 16th century a Munda tribal in the Ranchi district established himself as a local Raja. By virtue of his wealth and power he attracted reputable Brahmins to his court who Sanskritized his rituals and manufactured for him a Rajput genealogy. Eventually this status was accepted by other Rajputs. Similarly some Bhumij tribals of Maibhumi who were wealthy zemindars became converted to Hinduism and brought some of their co-tribals into the Hindu fold. Today these Bhumij regard themselves and are regarded by others as Hindus and have a status above that of some other local Hindu castes (Sinha 1956).

Castes which have elected to emphasize distinctive behavior may well be ambivalent about this behavior. Such ambivalence may generate new ideological principles. In summary, efforts at caste mobility may serve to intensify cultural diversity because high caste emulation and caste solidarity mechanisms may conflict, and caste solidarity may be an adjunct to caste mobility.

I observed the working out of the emulation-solidarity conflict during field work in 1956-57 among the southern portion of the Santal tribe. This tribe of about three million live largely within the Chotanagpur plateau in the states of Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa. The southern Santal live in Singhbhum district, Bihar, and the Mayurbhanj district of Orissa.

To begin near the end of the story, the Santals in the early 1940's became part of a pan-tribal political movement whose primary proclaimed end is the establishment of an aboriginal-dominated state within the Chotanagpur plateau. The political party founded at this time, now known as the

Jharkhand party, immediately established itself as a formidable contender at the polls. Many tribals support the party because in a tribal-dominated state they envisage themselves occupying high positions. For many activists the party provides an opportunity even without a tribal state to win prestigious political office. A few young tribal patriots have achieved pan-tribal identification and envisage a glorious destiny for aborigines in a new state of their own making and under their own control. The mass of Santals and other Mundari-speaking tribals such as the Munda and Ho as well as the non-Munda Oraons see in the party's success prospects for economic gain and a higher social status.

Until the Jharkhand movement the Santals were generally moving toward Hinduization with increasing ambivalence in recent years toward such distinctive tribal traits as cow sacrifice, beef eating, use of rice beer for consumption and ritual offering, public mixed dancing, etc. With the beginning of pan-tribal political activity the Santals resolved to check this drift which seemed to them to threaten tribal solidarity. The conflict between this decision and the marked ambivalence of many Santals toward tribally distinctive behavior with a low status value gave shape to an emergent Santal great tradition. But to understand the process it is necessary to provide some historical background.

Santals have long been settled agriculturalists typically living in villages with Hindu artisans and under the ultimate authority of Hindu rajas. By the 19th century Santal religious rites, marriage and funeral ceremonies, ritual paraphernalia, vocabulary, kinship relations and terminology has all been influenced by Hindu practices. A myth had developed that each patrilineal clan once had a distinct occupational function making ancient Santal society a replica of the wider society. Until the present pan-tribal movement most Santals attended and sometimes participated in the more spectacular Hindu festivals. However, it does not appear that much of the borrowing prior to this century was motivated by desire for higher status. Tribally distinctive behaviors with a low status association were not abandoned,

nor was the borrowing based particularly on high caste models. Much that was borrowed was reinterpreted so that fundamental pattern distinctions between high Hinduism and Santal culture were not much diminished. Santal culture retained its almost monistic pleasure orientation and did not accommodate itself to the pronounced Hindu concern for status.

Early in the 19th century a heavy influx of Hindus into the Chotanagpur plateau led to violent rebellions by the Santals and other Mundari tribals. The chief causes were economic exploitation by Hindu moneylenders land-grabbing by Hindus who used the British courts to great advantage and increased revenue demands by Hindu rulers. At least since these clashes the Santals have hated the Hindus as their exploiters. Santals also admire the Hindus for their ability to exploit them, for the majesty of their ceremonies, and for the power and wealth which they ascribe to them. Hatred, admiration and a measure of fear are embodied in the epithet 'diku' which the Santals and other Mundaris use to refer particularly to Hindus.

With the decline of available unexploited land accompanying the Hindu influx, internal Santal class distinctions seemed to have increased. By the early 20th century there is evidence of emulation of high caste behavior by upper class Santals. The relative prosperity of this class enabled them to establish prestigious relations with high caste Hindus who on their part profited financially from these relationships. A number of these Santals began to attend Hindu schools and here learned to renounce such degrading tribal practices as beef-eating and consumption of rice beer. But the schools produced more than emulation of observable behavior. Here new basic values were internalized. Santals learned to abhor the dominant pleasure motif of their culture and became unable to participate in the more public and sexual manifestations of this orientation such as group dances. They became ashamed of the lack of a Santal literary tradition. They learned to admire the elaborate phrasing of Hindu prayers and to value the explicit connection of morality and religion which their own culture lack. Of the utmost importance they became engrossed in status distinctions

and learned deeply the basis on which they are made. From this point in the early 20th century these upper class Santals may be regarded as in search of a great tradition. Even twenty-odd years ago one might have predicted, as many did, that they would choose Hinduism like those Munda and Bhumijs mentioned earlier.

The pan-tribal political movement which developed in the 1940's was initiated by educated Mundas and Oraons. The Santal upper class, who also tend to occupy important tribal offices, resolved to lead their tribe into the movement. After making this choice, they committed themselves to check the drift toward Hinduism which threatened tribal solidarity. Santals, particularly of their own class, were urged to join their fellows in cow sacrifice, beef eating, rice beer consumption, etc. Public pressure was applied to prevent attendance at Hindu ceremonies. To increase solidarity all Santals were urged to hold their own festivals on special, uniform dates and not simultaneously with Hindu festivals.

An organizational offshoot of the Jharkhand party emerged in 1950. Its function was to get all local tribals to return their religion for the census as 'Sarna', the Munda word for the sacred grove which is a common tribal locale for worship. The Santals, who dominated this organization in the southern portion of the Chotanagpur plateau, maintained the organization after the census, making it a spearhead of their emergent indigenous great tradition. The basic aim of the organization is to perpetuate distinctive tribal practices like cow sacrifice, etc., while creating a great written tradition worthy of respect by Santals and the wider society. In conformity with the separatist aims of this tradition, an original Santali script has been developed. The spiritual leader of the organization has written an epic play in which Santals of yore play a heroic part and conquer a human-sacrificing Hindu king. Two other Santals encouraged by the success of this play have also become playwrights.

The Sarna organization has developed prayers of an elaborate form making explicit the connection between morality

and religion. For contrast, a traditional Santal prayer may be given as an example :

Greetings Maran Buru. In the name of this festival I offer to you, so don't allow any sickness, headache, or stomach ache to come. We give to you that we may remain in good health.

Sarna prayer :

Greetings Maran Buru. Be kind enough and pleased to accept my bowing and greeting. I prostrate myself before you and direct my attention to you. Come down as the wind and fly like a storm. Guide me in the path of righteousness. I bow down in all directions.

A new conception of witchcraft connecting it with morality is also being propagated by the Sarna organization. 'Where there is no sin there are no witches. Men become sick from evil spirits who are the servants of sin and become well through worship of God who can pardon such sin.' The connection between morality and religion is emphasized not only because it raises the status value of Santal tradition but also because it can serve as a potent ideological force for certain behavioral reformations necessary to achieve a higher status. Essentially the new virtues emphasized are the associated ones of curtailing and postponing pleasure, and encouraging saving and education. New songs with lines like these carry the message :

O Brother ! In the city of Delhi they have become Members of Parliament.

O Brother ! You have only become a pundit in divorced women.

Or

At work time I become drunk—and forget my work.

At the time for study I spent my time making friends.

I forgot all about reading and writing.

The Santals are resolving their ambivalent feelings toward Hinduism and the conflicting attitudes about emulation and caste or tribal solidarity by developing a compromise great tradition. Distinctive practices are being maintained but in an emergent great tradition which reflects basic values derived from Hinduism. This attempt to achieve a higher status by establishing a respectable great tradition distinct from Hinduism

invites comparison with other sectarian movements which have been a recurring feature of Indian society. The present democratic political scene especially with its reserved seats for tribals and scheduled castes makes social and cultural separatism especially attractive. It would be interesting to consider whether such emulation-solidarity conflicts and their ultimate resolutions have historically served to perpetuate or to increase social and cultural diversity.

#### REFERENCES

Sinha, Surajit

- 1956 The Acculturation of the Bhumi of Manbhumi, a Study in Ethnic Integration and Social Class Formation. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Département of Anthropology, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

Srinivas, M. N.

- 1952 Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India. Oxford : Clarendon Press.

## CRITERIA OF CASTE RANKING IN SOUTH INDIA

by E. KATHLEEN GOUGH ABERLE, M. A., PH. D. (Cantab.)

**A**GE, sex, ritual value, authority, education and personal qualities of leadership are all principles of social stratification in South India. But when villagers speak of *castes* as higher or lower, they refer to ritual rank. They refer, that is, to relative degrees of ritual purity and pollution.

The ostensible criteria by which castes are ranked are also ritual criteria—such matters as diet, rules of marriage, myth of origin, or ritual quality of occupation, which make sense only in terms of certain religious beliefs. It is clear, however, that these criteria are selectively and somewhat inconsistently employed. Thus, in spite of the higher ritual value normally accorded to vegetarianism, we find that some meat-eaters in fact outrank some vegetarians. Similarly, in spite of the value placed upon female chastity and widow celibacy, we find in Kerala that very high ranking Kshattriya queens have in the past practised divorce and widow-marriage. And castes with ritually clean occupations, such as basket-makers, often rank very low. The question therefore arises : what are the real bases of ritual rank ? I shall examine this question in terms of ethnographic material from Kerala. My general conclusions would also apply to the Tanjore District of Madras.<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to know to what extent they are applicable throughout India.

Before British rule in these Hindu kingdoms, society was largely structured through what I shall call relationships of servitude. In a relationship of servitude, the inferior owed the superior economic and ritual services in return for economic rights, and the superior had judicial rights over the

---

Dr. Kathleen Gough Aberle received her Ph. D. in social anthropology from Cambridge. She has carried on extensive field research in Kerala and Tanjore. She has published widely on kinship and social structure in India.

inferior, to settle his disputes and to penalize him if he broke the law. Although these relationships were in several respects different from those of feudal Europe, I shall for convenience call the parties to them lords and vassals.

Some relationships of servitude can be clearly ranked in terms of degrees of onerousness to the servitor. Others seem to be incommensurable. Most commonly, relationships of servitude operated between families and were hereditary. Always, lord and vassal came from different castes, and the castes from which each might come were limited, sometimes to one, occasionally to three or four.

In the kingdoms of Central Kerala, which were those of Calicut, Walluvanad and Cochin, I can distinguish certainly eight, possible nine, major types of relationship of servitude. Four of these types apparently existed in all forms of local community except for some merchant settlements. These four were as follows.

(1) In the first type, the lord was a village landlord or *jenmi*. The *jenmi* might be a Nambudiri Brahman family, a diety of a Brahmanical temple, or a family of one of a range of aristocratic Nayar, Samantan or Kshattriya castes. The vassal was a non-cultivating military tenant (*kānakkāran* or *kānandar*) from a family of one of a range of Nayar Commoner castes.

(2) The lord was either a village landlord or a non-cultivating military tenant; the vassal, a cultivating tenant or *verumpāttamdar*, normally of the Tiyyar or Irava caste.

(3) The lords were collectively the village landlord and the non-cultivating military tenants of the village. The vassal was of a family of one of the castes of Village Servants or *jenmam avakāśis*. Village Servants included four castes of Smiths, Astrologers, Bow-makers, and several different castes of Washermen, Barbers and Directors of Obsequies. These families came directly under the control of an assembly of non-cultivating tenants, with the village landlord as their overlord and court of appeal.

(4) The lord was a village landlord, a non-cultivating tenant or (in some trading settlements) a merchant. The vassal

was a serf or slave, normally of the castes of Chettiyar, Pulayas. Serfs performed mainly rice cultivation, and also salt-production and other menial tasks. Serfs were perhaps originally tied to the soil, but by the eighteenth century at least, they could be leased or sold as slaves.

These four relationships can be ranked in terms of degrees of onerousness of servitude, by the following criteria : (a) the extent of the servitor's customary rights in land-produce ; (b) the number and kinds of luxury goods the servitor was permitted, by sumptuary laws, to possess ; and (c) the extent of the lord's judicial rights in his vassal. Criterion (a) varied, for example, between a serf's right to mere daily sustenance from his lord, and a Nayar *kānakkāran*'s right of management and redistribution of the produce of a considerable estate, subject to his payment to the village landlord of dues in kind and cash. Criterion (b) concerned such matters as the use of umbrellas, silk or embroidered cloth, gold jewelry, silver vessels, awnings, various kinds of musical instruments, palanquins, caparisoned elephants, roof-tiles, and many other luxury goods whose enjoyment was prescribed by law according to caste membership. Criterion (c) varied between a lord's complete right of life and death over his serf, and the right of exaction of fines in punishment of a limited range of offences.

By these criteria relationships (1), (2) and (4) rank in order of increasing onerousness to the servitor. (3) seems to have been identical to (2) in terms of sumptuary goods and judicial status, but somewhat incommensurate in terms of rights in land-produce. This was because the cultivating tenant received his share of land-produce as a portion of the crop he harvested, whereas the village servant received customary dues of grain and other crops from each household of the patron castes. Roughly speaking, however, the standards of living of cultivating tenants and village servants seem to have been much the same, and their relationships of servitude can be ranked as virtually equivalent in degrees of onerousness to the servitor.

Local communities were grouped in three major types of political organization. These were, first, 'ordinary' villages

(*desams*) directly or indirectly under the authority of the king. Such villages might have as their village landlords either a Village Headman (*desavari*) of a Nayar aristocratic caste, or a District Chief (*nāduvari*) of some higher Nayar aristocratic caste or of one of the Samantan castes, or else a branch of the Samantan or Kshattriya royal lineage (*svarūpam*) of the kingdom as a whole. These villages collectively yield two relationships of servitude above the level of the village, numbers (5) and (6). In relationship (5), the vassal was a Nayar Village Headman or *desavari* (himself a village landlord); the lord, either a Nayar District Chief or else the king himself. In (6), the vassal was a Nayar or Samantan District Chief; the lord, his king (*konnatiri*). (6) ranks as less onerous than (5), and (5), than (1).

A second type of local community was that of merchants and urban craftsmen in the ports and in some inland trading settlements. The greater merchants were Syrian Christians, Europeans, Muslims or Māppillas, and several Hindu castes from outside Kerala. Usually, the king appointed a hereditary Merchant Headman to govern such a settlement. The Koya family of Calicut in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is an example of a Muslim Merchant Headman appointed by the king to govern a settlement composed of (mostly foreign) Muslim and Hindu traders together with indigenous Hindu artisans and serfs.<sup>2</sup> As the European trading companies began to settle on the coast, the kings of Kerala allotted their commanders similar settlements within the ports, which attracted to themselves indigenous artisans, labourers and middleman traders. Although they were not hereditary in the case of the European companies the heads of all such merchant settlements were accorded rights comparable to those of a District Chief inland, and, even though they were not Hindus, acquired honourable roles in royal and other Hindu religious ceremonies. There were further subdivisions of rank among merchants themselves, but I do not know whether, among indigenous Muslim and Hindu traders and artisans, these took the form of hereditary relationships of servitude. Certainly, merchant families who settled long in the ports acquired their own Hindu

Village Servants and serfs after the fashion of Hindu village landlords and non-cultivating tenants.

A Merchant Headman's relationship of servitude to the king (number 7) was clearly less onerous than (2), but is difficult to rank by comparison with (1), (5) or (6), for there are several incommensurables in the areas of sumptuary goods and land rights. Merchants, for example, were probably in some areas prevented from owning wet rice lands, yet given extensive rights in garden and forest land producing pepper and timber for trade. The sumptuary goods acquired by merchants were also in many ways incommensurable with those of village aristocrats. As foreigners, for example, or as people of different religious and cultural traditions, merchants had different kinds of clothing and food from the indigenous Hindu population. At the ports, moreover, they enjoyed a range of trade goods from overseas, some of which were not distributed inland.

The third type of local community comprised villages owned privately by Nambūdiri Brahman families, and temple estates (*sankētams*) managed by committees of Brahmans. Brahmans governed their own communities and were above the jurisdiction of the royal courts.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, moreover, the king himself was subject to Brahmanical jurisdiction. A king could acquire a right of protection of one or more Brahmanical temples near his domains, and thus become a vassal of the Brahman deity. The king acquired a right of partial command over the Nayar soldiers living on such estate. In turn the Brahman assembly could fine a vassal king if he violated their economic or judicial rights. Brahman legal specialists were also consulted in the administration of justice by courts and caste assemblies, for the law of the kingdom was defined as religious law. Finally, the head of the Brahman caste (the Aravancheri Tamburakkal) installed the kings of Central Kerala. The king was thus in some senses a vassal of the Brahman caste as a whole (number 8), a form of servitude less onerous than any other within his domains.

One last type of servitude may have existed only on Brahman and temple estates : that between the deity of a

Brahman temple and families of several castes of Temple Servants or Ambalavasis (number 9). Temple servants seem to have come directly under the jurisdiction of Brahmans as representatives of the deity. I am unsure of the precise organization of temple servants : they may have had several different forms of servitude. In terms of rights to sumptuary goods, their servitude was clearly less onerous than (1), more onerous than (8). My information is insufficient to rank their servitude in relation to (5) and (6); there seem to have been a number of incommensurables here.

These relationships of servitude gave social and judicial statuses to a majority of castes within one kingdom. With regard to the *ritual* ranking of these castes, the following statements seem valid.

A. If the members of Caste X have judicial rights as lords over the members of Caste Y, X will rank ritually higher than Y.

B. If the members of Caste X occupy a form of servitude unequivocally less onerous than those of Caste Y, X will rank ritually higher than Y.

C. There is a strong tendency for degrees of ritual distance between castes to reflect degrees of onerousness of servitude. Thus, the ritual distances involved in relationships (1), (5), (6), (8) and (9) have to do with nice distinctions in the rules governing hypergamous marriages, limiting commensality and restricting types of contact and entry into sacred or private places. (2) and (3) involve more stringent commensal, sexual and tactile prohibitions, together with a degree of distance pollution and with the vassal's total exclusion from the lord's house, temples and bathing pools. (4) involves maximal prohibitions with regard to distance pollution and all other forms.

The judicial hierarchy thus provided a broad framework for the ritual ranking of castes. Within this framework, however, some castes occupying the same judicial status do seem to have been mutually ranked in terms of the ritual quality of their occupation together with the range of their clientele. Thus, the village servant castes occupied the same

judicial status in relation to their lords. Some of these castes gave subsidiary services to each other and to the cultivating tenants. However, castes like Astrologers and Smiths could work for any caste without lowering their rank, because their occupations were clean, whereas castes offering polluting personal services, such as Washermen, Barbers and Directors of Obsequies, were themselves polluting to any of the castes they served.<sup>4</sup> In general, the following statements apply to the ritual ranking of castes who gave polluting personal services.

D. If Caste Y performs personal services defined as polluting, for Caste X or for any caste of lower rank than X, Y will rank ritually lower than X, provided that Y does not also receive polluting services from X.

E. If Caste X performs ritually polluting services, but does not perform them for Caste Y or for any caste ranking lower than Y, X will rank ritually higher than Y.

Thus with regard to castes occupying the *same* position in the judicial hierarchy, it seems that the ostensible ritual reasons which informants give for their mutual ranking turn out in fact to be the real ones. We must recognize, however, that the ritual criteria themselves are a function of power relationships, for no caste will give polluting personal services to another unless it is forced to do so, by that other or by some higher authority.

These propositions seem to account for the traditional ritual ranking of a majority of the castes. There seem even traditionally, however, to have been a number of castes in each kingdom whose mutual rank was uncertain or who disputed for rank, and there were a very few who acknowledged equality. The following propositions are suggested for these castes.

F. When two or more castes occupied identical judicial positions, performed occupations of comparable ritual value, and cooperated in production, they acknowledged equality, evinced by such customs as reception of cooked rice food from one another. The four Smith castes of Carpenters, Blacksmiths,

Goldsmiths and Bell-metal workers in Kerala exemplify this situation.

G. When two castes occupied identical judicial positions, performed ritually comparable services, but did not cooperate in production, other castes would rank them equally. They would be obliged to accept equality in public situations, for example high caste marriage feasts to which subordinate castes were invited, but they would chronically dispute for precedence. Barbers and Washermen serving the same clientele are the classic example of this.

H. When two or more castes occupied similar but in some ways incommensurate judicial positions and performed tasks which were ritually incommensurate, they would, if they met, dispute for rank. Others also might differ widely in assessing their rank or might decline to rank them at all. Cultivating tenants and Smiths, Temple Servants and Nayar Aristocrats, foreign petty traders and indigenous cultivating tenants, may each have been examples of incommensurate judicial status and ritual rank. I am, however, uncertain of the facts in some of these cases.

There were finally a number of itinerant castes who bartered their wares or services with villagers. Snake-charmers, palmists, potters and mat-makers fell into this category. I am uncertain of the pre-British status of these castes, but in more recent times they have been only partly incorporated into ritual rank hierarchies, occupying different ranks in different contexts. Presumably because they held no fixed rights in land-produce and their judicial status was uncertain, they evoked general opprobrium. In matters of commensality and touching, each caste in the village repudiated them as of lower rank than itself. On the other hand, the tasks of some such as Snake-charmers (*Pulluvar*), gave them access to high caste gardens not enjoyed by lower caste villagers.

During and since British rule, the following major changes have affected caste ranking.

1. The legal bases of the caste system were gradually removed, the religious rules of caste thus becoming dissociated from the law of the state,

2. The creation of a bureaucratic government and the partial change to a fuel technology opened up new, caste-free occupations.

3. As a result of (1) and (2), labour and land, as well as most other goods, became marketable commodities.

4. The pacification of the kingdoms, coupled with improved transport, increased spatial mobility.

In spite of these changes, traditional relationships of servitude persisted in a modified form in some rural areas of Kerala at least until 1949. This occurred where a dominant high caste retained possession of most of the land ; where the land was still used primarily for subsistence cultivation ; where subordinate castes could find no superior employment outside their traditional services ; and where population pressure and movement had not forced a complete breakdown of hereditary services and their replacement by a labour-market. In these conditions the dominant caste could use its economic power to enforce observance of traditional intercaste laws.

These remnants of servitude relationships still provided a basis for the ritual ranking of some of the castes in some villages, whole caste groups had disentangled themselves from servitude, by entering caste-free employment, by becoming independent owner-farmers or purely contractual tenants, or by continuing to render traditional services, but in modern market relationships. There was still a fair consensus of opinion about the ritual rank of some of these castes. For those who accepted ritual rank at all, Brahmins still topped the hierarchy, presumably because if society is to be organized hierarchically in terms of ritual criteria, ritual specialists must form its apex. Similarly, general opinion still placed castes who offered polluting personal services below the castes whom they served. Here, however, the ranking might become a mere matter of opinion. An ambitious barber, for example, may refuse to eat the food of some of his own clients, claiming higher rank than theirs. The former serf castes were still popularly ranked at the base of the hierarchy as Harijans,

and in their case, their own behaviour often showed acceptance of this status. For poverty often drove them to accept the food of others, and to observe traditional rules of ritual rank in an effort to maintain their employment.

But in general, under modern conditions, many castes cannot now be mutually ranked by objective criteria, either as regards the bases or the behavioural concomitants of rank. It is common now in South Indian villages to find some six to fifteen castes in the middle reaches of the hierarchy whose mutual rank is a mere matter of opinion. Some of these castes once occupied local relationships of servitude. Some recently immigrated from other regions. Some were itinerants, forced by law or economic exigency to settle in villages. Some have arrived from towns. Different individuals, even in the same caste, give different versions of the rank order of these groups, and their behaviour on the ground offers no satisfactory support for a fixed rank order. In many contexts they have abandoned traditional rules of ritual distance. Touch pollution, for example, is likely to be a dead letter among them, and they drink coffee together in shops. Endogamy of course segregates them, but provides no criterion of mutual rank.

The degree to which such castes, living in the same village, will openly accept equality of rank and haul down ritual barriers, seems to depend on their position in the total economic and political structure of the community. I can distinguish two polar types of interaction between them. In one type, there is no longer a dominant land-owning caste in the village. Land has been parcelled out in small lots to outsiders and to families of each of the uncertainly ranked category of castes. These castes have no common economic master. They are mostly composed of petty bureaucrats, independent cultivators or small entrepreneurs. In this situation the castes adopt a policy of mutual segregation; inter-caste relations tend to become 'back-to-back' relations. Some individuals may swap news in teashops, accept coffee or snacks as private guests at weddings, or even dine secretly with personal acquaintances in other castes. But the caste-groups, as castes, have no joint assembly or judicial

organization and no customary forms of behaviour which reflect either acceptance of mutual ranking or of equality. Each makes verbal claims to higher rank than the others ; a majority in each customarily reject the other castes' rice food ; and competitive hostility tends to prevail between them. Some castes may belong to large-scale reform movements each of which aims at the social uplift of one particular caste.

In the second situation, one or two traditionally dominant castes retain control of most of the village land. They employ a range of subordinate castes, not in hereditary forms of servitude but in modern marketing conditions. In this case, castes who have similar interests in opposition to their landlord-employers call a halt to disputes concerning ritual rank. They band together to increase their economic strength in the market situation and to escape the relics of judicial servitude. Thus in one Tanjore village, fourteen Non Brahman caste-groups of farmers, traders and craftsmen, all tenants of a dominant group of Brahman landlords, had by 1951 amalgamated their caste assemblies into a joint local organization.<sup>5</sup> Its aims were to prevent Non Brahman disputes from passing to Brahmanical jurisdiction, and by concerted effort to lower the rents paid by tenants. While remaining endogamous, these castes freely entered each others' homes and kitchens, and attended and dined publicly at each others' marriages, funerals and festivals. In another village in 1952, a similar organization flourished between two Harijan castes, Pallans and Parayans. Their members, landless labourers, held almost identical forms of employment with local landlords of a variety of higher castes. The multi-caste assembly's role again combined labour-unionism with judicial functions, this time as a cell within the Communist Party. I suggest that in all these cases, castes' roles in the economy, and the power-relations which these give rise to, are the prime determinants of their ritual rank-fixing relationships. Neither in the present nor the past can the ritual ranking of castes be understood without reference to the political and economic systems in which they are embedded.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The fieldwork on which this paper is based was done in three villages of Kerala during October 1947 to July 1949. It was made possible by the grant of William Wyse and Anthony Wilkin Studentships from Cambridge University. In October 1951 I returned to South India and worked in two villages of Tanjore District until April 1953. This work was financed by a British Treasury Studentship in Foreign Languages and Cultures.
2. K. V. Krishna Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut*, The Norman Printing Bureau, Calicut, 1938, pp. 103-4.
3. K. V. Krishna Ayyar, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 47-49.
4. See also M. N. Srinivas, 'The Social System of a Mysore Village' in *Village India*, edited by McKim Marriott, University of Chicago Press, 1955, p. 8.
5. See my *Caste in a Tanjore Village*, forthcoming in *Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology*, No. 2, Cambridge University Press.

# A MULTIPLE SCALING TECHNIQUE FOR CASTE RANKING<sup>1</sup>

by P. M. MAHAR

## *Introduction*

**R**ECENTLY, in reviewing past studies of caste ranking in South Asia<sup>2</sup>, McKim Marriott concluded :

Studies of social life in South Asia have reached an impasse on the problem of measuring relative caste ranking...The problem of measuring caste rank is crucial for many kinds of social research in India, Pakistan, and Ceylon. But the problem is as yet unsolved.

(Marriott 1957 : 1)

Marriott himself then offered a technique he has used with considerable success for the study of ranking and the varied criteria determining caste rank. The present report was prompted by the problem Marriott pointed up.

It is an attempt to offer a method for measuring caste ranking which is more limited in scope, but hopefully, more refined than those usually used in the study of caste hierarchy. Results from its application suggest a rather high degree of consensus in the village studied concerning caste ranking and ritual bases of rank.

The method offers the investigator : (1) considerable control over the criteria for ranking, (2) a means for systematic analysis of responses from many informants according to an objective test for consensus, (3) a means for pin-pointing dissensus as well as consensus, and (4) an objective means of replication of the study in the same locality.

---

Dr. Pauline M. Mahar has a Ph. D in sociology from Cornell University. In addition to extensive research on inter-group relations in the United States, she carried on fieldwork in western Uttar Pradesh in 1954-1956, with particular reference to the position of the Harijans.

Through use of this method, it was possible to reveal a hierarchy in which eighteen out of twenty-two castes could be fairly precisely located in terms of fifteen different ranks. Those castes upon whose ranks there was disagreement could be specified. The broad classes of castes as perceived by the villagers were suggested by the ranking evidence.

### *The Ritual Distance Interview*

In an effort to rank the Hindu and Muslim castes of Khālāpur, a village in western Uttar Pradesh (the list of castes appears below), I limited my concern to one class of criteria for ranking, that of ritual purity and pollution.<sup>3</sup> What has been called 'the Hindu Pollution Concept' (Stevenson 1954 : 63) has been considered by a number of students to be the basic, crucial and most uniquely characteristic property of the Indian caste system.<sup>4</sup>

Within this category of caste phenomena, I tried to learn about the norms relevant to the interactions symbolizing inequality of ritual status in dyadic inter-caste relations. Such norms may be inferred from customs relating to touch, eating, drinking and smoking when members of two different castes are in contact. If consistent rules of inequality govern all paired relationships, the combination of all pairs results in a consistent caste hierarchy, in this case, a kind of tactile-consumption ritual hierarchy for a village or locality.

The beliefs concerning the ritual purity or impurity of various castes' occupational, dietary and marriage customs may be reflected in such a tactile-consumption ritual hierarchy. However, they are not directly tapped as criteria for ranking in the Ritual Distance Interview, the technique which I shall describe and illustrate in this paper. Other dimensions of stratification, those which H. N. C. Stevenson has called 'secular' (Stevenson 1954 : 63), especially economic and political power of various kinds, may also be reflected in this ritual hierarchy, but they were not directly involved.

The Ritual Distance Interview adapted ideas from the Bogardus Social Distance Scale (Bogardus 1928)<sup>5</sup> and from Blunt's ritual ranking of castes of the United Provinces

(Blunt 1931), and combined these with the Guttman scaling technique for ranking objects according to a single consensual attitude dimension (Guttman 1944; Stoffer, Guttman *et al.* 1950).

### The Ritual Distance Interview

Now I shall ask you some questions about your customs.

1. Can a---touch you ? Will you object to it or will he (or they\*) become polluted ?
2. Can a---sit on your cot ? Will you object to it.....
3. Can a---come on your cooking area ? Will you object to it.....
4. Can a---touch your brass utensils ? Will you object to it.....
5. Can a---touch your earthenware vessels ? Will you object to it.....
- \*\*6. Can a---smoke the stem of your pipe ? Will you object to it.....
7. Can a---smoke the bowl of your pipe ? Will you object to it.....
8. Can you eat *pakkā* (cooked in milk or butter) food from the hand of a---?
9. Can you eat *kachchā* (cooked in water) food such as cooked pulse, bread or rice from the hand of a---?
10. Can you take dry uncooked food (*sukhā sidhā*) from a---?
- \*\*11. Can you take water from the hand of a---?
12. Can a---touch your water vessel ? Would you object to it.....
13. Can a---touch your children ? Would you object to it.....

(The name of each caste was filled in the blanks above in turn. All castes were asked about for each question before going on to the next question.)

---

\*The Hindi *wah* can signify either the singular or plural third person in this area.

\*\*The wording of item 6 and 11 was changed between the pre-test schedule of items and the survey schedule.

### Questions in Hindi

Ab ham tumhare se kuch sawal puchenge, tum logoñ ke riwajon ki bābat.

1. Ek——tumhen hāth lagā sake kyā ? Tum gussā manāoge, yā kī wah bhid jāegā ?
2. Ek——tumhāri khāt par baithe sake kyā ? Tum gussā manāoge?.....
3. Ek——tumhare chauke pe chādh sake kyā ? Tum gussā manāoge.....
4. Ek——tumhare pital ke bartanoy ko hāth lagā sake kyā ? Tum gussā manāoge.....
5. Tumhare mitthi ke bartanoy ko hāth lagā sake kyā, ek—? Tum gussā manāoge.....
6. Tumhārā hukkā pī sake kyā, ek——, us kī nali utār ke ? Tum gussā manāoge.....
7. To tumhare chilam pī sake kyā, ek—— ? Tum gussā manāoge.....
8. To tum——ke hāth kā pakkā khānā khā sako kyā ? Matlab halwā, pūri, ādi.
9. Aur kachchā khānā le sako kyā, ek——ke hāth se ? Matlab dāl roti, chāwal, ādi.
10. Sukhā sidha jo hai, wah le sako,——se ?
11. Tum——ke hāth sē pāni le sako kyā ?
12. Tumhare pāni ke ghade ko hāth lagā sake kyā, ek— ? Tum gussā manāoge, yā kī wah bhid jāegā ?
13. Tumhare bachche ko hāth lagā sake kyā, ek ? Tum gussā manāoge.....,

### Castes of Khālāpur

1. Grainparcher	Bhaṛbhūjā
2. Genealogist	Bhāṭ
3. Sweeper	Chūṛhā
4. Brahman	Brāhmaṇ
5. Chamar (untouchable agricultural laborer )	Chamār
6. Carpenter	Baṛhī
7. Washerman	Dhobi
8. Shepherd	Gaṛariyā
9. Gosāin (religious sect)	Gusāīn
10. Shoemaker	Jaṭiyā Chamār
11. Water-carrier	Jhinvar
12. Jogi (religious sect)	Jogi
13. Kabir Panthi Weaver	Kabirbaṇsi Julāhā
14. Chamar Weaver	Chamar Julāhā
15. Potter	Kumhār
16. Mirasi (Muslim beggar and entertainer)	Mirāsī Dūm
17. Barber	Nāī
18. Rajput (warrior)	Rājpūt
19. Muslim Rajput	Musalmān Rājput
20. Goldsmith	Sunār
21. Oilpresser	Teli
22. Merchant	Baniyā

Guttman scaling is now a well-established technique in social psychology for the study of attitudes and other social phenomena. More recently, the Guttman scale has been elaborated into types of scales by Matilda Riley, James Riley, Jackson Toby and their colleagues (1954). It is one of the

types they have called the 'object scale' and the 'group scale' which may be combined into a technique applicable to the study of ritual ranking of Indian castes.

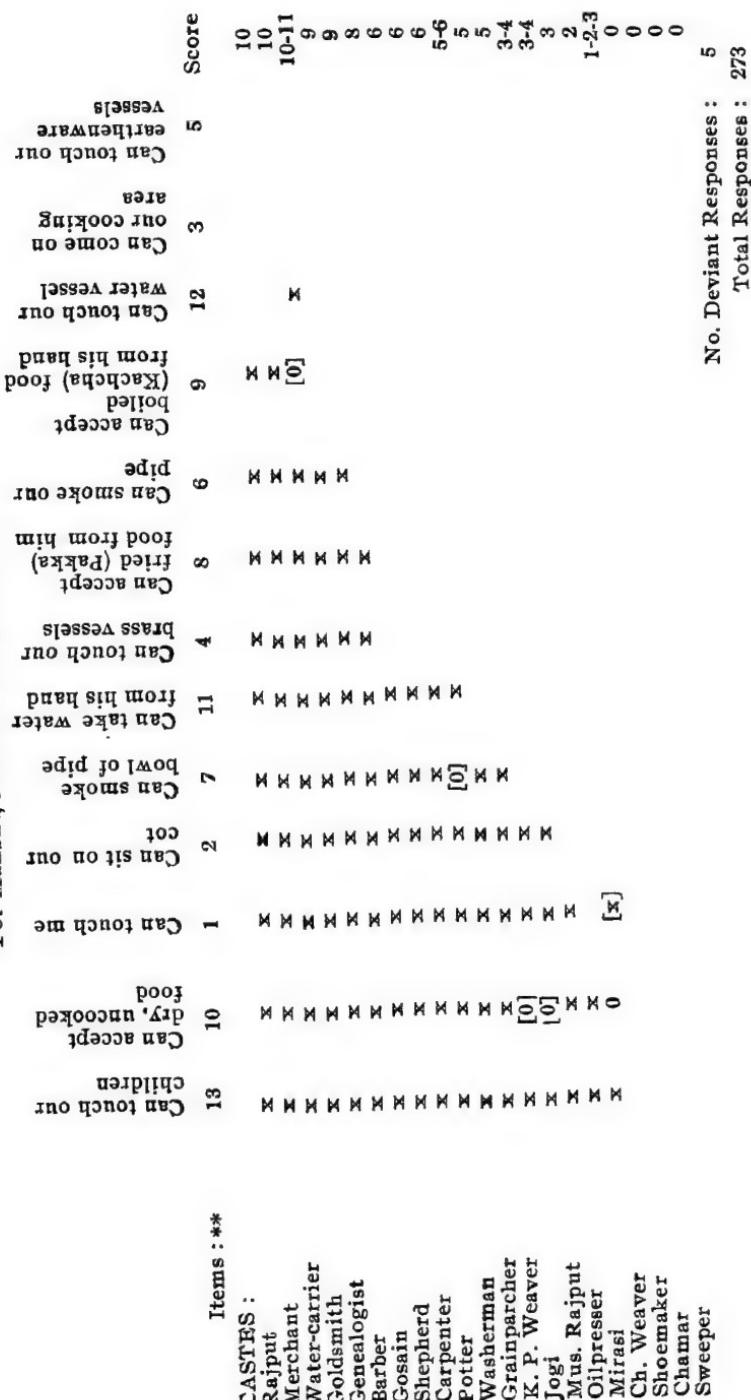
The Guttman model was used in framing the questions of the Ritual Distance Interview. The actual content of the thirteen items of the interview was developed after considerable preliminary investigation of the ritual practices of the Khalapur villagers. (We had already worked in the village for over a year when this study was done.) The wording of the interview questions was developed in cooperation with a linguist, John Gumperz. Through pre-tests with a tape-recorder (to attain spontaneity and experimentation on the part of the interviewer), we tried very hard to develop wording of the questions in language natural to natives of Khalapur. Our ideal was to ask each question exactly as a villager would have phrased it.

The items were formulated in such a way that if the attitudes were unidimensional by the test for a Guttman scale, each item would represent a different point along a single continuum of ritual purity and pollution. Acceptance of any particular item of the Guttman scale of ritual practices would consistently be associated with acceptance of all items representing a *greater* degree of ritual distance. Thus, for example, if an individual respondent, say a Brahman, were willing to allow a member of the Grainparcher caste to smoke the bowl of his pipe, he would also allow Grainparchers to sit on his cot and touch him. He would also accept dry uncooked food from the Grainparchers and would allow the Grainparchers to touch his children—all actions representing *greater* ritual distance than permission to smoke the bowl of the pipe.

### *The Scale-Picture*

An example of such a ritual distance scale appears in Figure 1. This is the scale-picture of the two hundred and seventy-three responses of Manbhi, a Brahman woman. She

FIGURE 1  
*Scale-Picture of Responses Indicating Ritual Distance.*  
 For Manbhi, Brahman Caste, Female, 40.



was asked thirteen questions about twenty-one castes. (Her own caste was omitted.) We can see from looking at the top of the picture, that she would allow members of the Rajput, Merchant, and Water-carrier castes to perform ten of the thirteen ritual actions. At the bottom of the picture, it can be seen that she would not allow members of the Chamar Weaver, Shoemaker, Chamar (untouchable agricultural laborer) or Sweeper castes to do any of these things. Between these two extremes, the other castes can be regularly ranked according to the action permitted of least ritual distance. Thus, members of those castes (i. e., Washermen and Grain-parchers) whom Manbhi will allow to smoke the bowl of the pipe (item 7), but to whom she *prohibits* actions of *lesser* ritual distance, she *permits* actions of *greater* ritual distance. They can sit on the cot, they can touch her and her children, all items indicating greater degrees of ritual distance. Manbhi's responses scale according to the Guttman test since, for any behavior permitted, she also allows members of a caste to whom that right is granted, to do everything of *greater* ritual distance.

### *The Respondents*

Ritual Distance interviews for eighteen respondents, nine men and nine women from eleven different castes, were analysed. (See Figure 2 for their distribution.) These respondents were part of a pre-test and stratified random sample drawn for a Ritual Distance Survey undertaken in Khalapur. The eighteen interviews used in this analysis were done by Miss Usha Bhagat and Miss Saubhagya Taneja. I myself was present during eight of the interviews. Private interviews were obtained with fourteen of the respondents. In four cases one or more family members or neighbors were present. In these instances, others present did make comments about ritual distance practices. In three cases, the informant was the eldest person present, so did not need to defer to the others. In the fourth, a Chamar woman, her comments recorded during

the interview indicate that she did not hesitate to disagree with those around her.

FIGURE 2

*Sex and Caste of Eighteen Respondents*

	Male	Female
Rajput	1	0
Brahman	1	1
Merchant	2	0
Water-carrier	1	2
Carpenter	1	2
Potter	0	1
Barber	0	1
Washerman	1	0
Genealogist	0	1
Chamar	1	1
Sweeper	1	0
	— 9	— 9

Each interview lasted less than one hour. In some instances, in order not to tire respondents unduly, the interview was administered in two parts at two different times. This was true for five individuals : the Brahman woman, the older Merchant man, the younger Carpenter woman, the Potter woman, and the Chamar man.

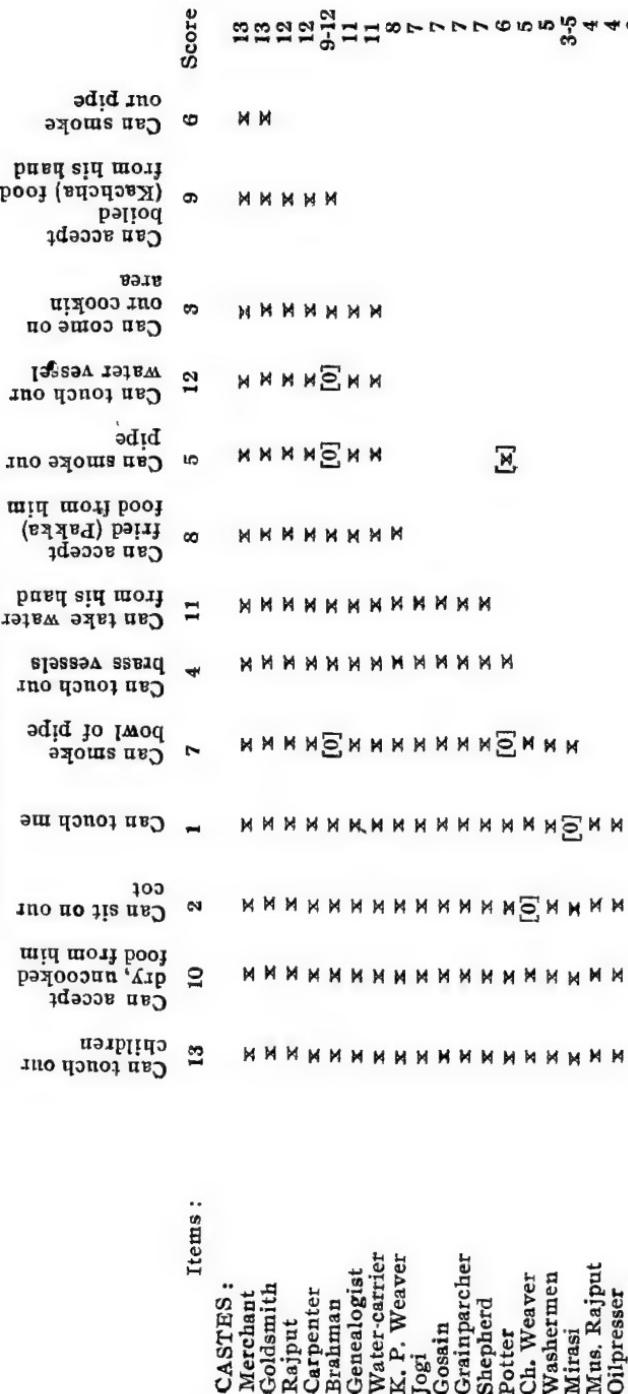
*The Purity-Pollution Continuum*

In the analysis of the ritual distance, interviews of these eighteen respondents, I found that the responses of all could be diagrammed in the Guttman-scale fashion. The scale-picture for Kishandai, a Potter woman (Figure 3) presents a second example.

On the basis of the *number* of actions permitted each caste by a respondent recorded in his scale-picture, it is possible to

**FIGURE 3**  
*Scale-Picture of Responses Indicating Ritual Distance*

Kishundai, Barber Caste, Female, Age 40



Number of Deviant Responses : 7  
 Total Responses : 278

assign each caste a score. The scores derived from Manbhi's responses are listed in the final right column of Figure 1. From these scores, we can arrive at the hierarchy of castes representing Manbhi's ritual ranking of twenty-one castes of Khalapur shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4

*Scorings of Castes Derived from Manbhi's Scale-Picture (Figure 1)*

## Score

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 10 | Rajput, Merchant, Water-carrier*          |
| 8  | Genealogist, Goldsmith, Barber            |
| 6  | Gosain, Shepherd, Carpenter, Potter       |
| 5  | Washerman, Grainparcher                   |
| 4  | Jogi, Kabir Panthi Weaver                 |
| 3  | Muslim Rajput                             |
| 2  | Oilpresser, Mirasi                        |
| 0  | Chamar Weaver, Shoemaker, Chamar, Sweeper |

In the same way, it is possible to derive ritual caste rankings from the scale-pictures of the other seventeen informants. By comparison of the eighteen individual hierarchies it is possible to derive the ritual ranking of castes for Khalapur village as a whole.

As might be expected, respondents tended to vary the ordering of the action items as revealed in their respective scale-pictures. One item would appear to signify greater ritual distance for some respondents than for others. But all respondents ordered six of the items in an almost identical sequence. These items are numbers 13, 1, 7, 4, 8 and 9 in that order. (See questionnaire schedule.). Five of the 'other' items were not placed along the continuum in exactly the same

---

\*The scores of 10 for the Rajputs and Merchants include item 9 accepting boiled food. The score of 10 for the Water-carriers does not include item 9, but adds instead item 12, touching water vessel. Since item 9 is one of the six items used in the ritual purity-pollution continuum, the Water-carriers receive a score of 5 while the Rajputs and Merchants receive scores of 6 when the continuum items are used in the over-all analysis.

positions by all informants, but almost all considered item 10 to be placed either before or after item 13. Item 2 was almost always placed before or after item 1. Items 12, 3, and 5, while yielding no consistent ordering among themselves, were almost always placed before or after item 9. In a sense, any one of these could be substituted for item 9, just as 10 could be substituted for 13, and 2, for 1 ( see Figure 5 ). This principle of substitution was actually used in scoring the responses of the Chamar boy. Since he was not asked item 13, his responses to item 10 were substituted for 13 in the final scoring.

Two items, 11 and 6 are not placed in the same positions consistently by respondents. The inconsistencies in the assignments of these two items may be due to a change in the wording of the items between the pre-test schedule and the survey schedule. With standardized wording, these items might also have had relatively fixed places on the continuum of ritual actions.

We may ask why the items fall in the particular sequence which they do. A theory explaining the order of these items on the purity-pollution continuum can be derived from Stevenson's conceptualization (1954). The principles involved include : (1) the greater seriousness of internal pollution ( as from taking polluted food or water ) over external pollution ( touch ) ; (2) the conductibility of vessels, with the further qualification that porous earthenware vessels are only externally pollutable ; and (3) the protective nature of such products of the cow as milk, ghi ( clarified butter ) and dung, so that food cooked in milk or ghi, for example, are less easily polluted than food cooked in water. The first principle would explain the greater permissiveness regarding touch and the greater strictness regarding food. The first and second principles would explain the greater permissiveness concerning brass vessels as compared with earthenware vessels and the earth-floored cooking area. I am not sure why there is such permissiveness regarding the use of the earthenware bowl of the pipe. Possibly the cow-dung coals used to ignite the pipe, the ashes and smoke pervade the porous interior of the bowl and protect it from pollution. Perhaps children are less easily

polluted than adults because, traditionally, their status is lower than that of adults until adolescence.

Degrees of seriousness of pollution are suggested by these village respondents not only in the relative numbers of castes allowed to perform the various acts, but also in the spontaneous comments made by ten of them regarding means of purification. While defilement from touch may be dispelled through bathing and washing one's clothes, a polluted brass vessel may be purified only through scouring it with hot coals, and polluted earthenware vessel must be discarded entirely. No means of purification after taking polluted food or water were offered.

FIGURE 5  
*Ritual Purity Continuum of Six Items*

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	13 touch children	1 touch you	7 smoke bowl of pipe	4 touch brass utensils	8 accept fried (pakka)	9 accept boiled food	
	10 dry food	2 cot			12 water vessel		
					3 cooking area		
					5 earthenware vessels		

FIGURE 6  
*Scoring from Six Items of the Purity-Pollution Continuum*

Score	Items
0	—
1	13
2	13 1
3	13 1 7
4	13 1 7 4
5	13 1 7 4 8
6	13 1 7 4 8 9

### *The Scoring*

After deriving the ordinal relationship of the items of interaction, a scoring system ranging from '6' to '0' was

constructed with the six stable items of the purity-pollution continuum. In such a system, each score represents an identical combination of responses to items by all informants. Thus, a score of '3' always is to be understood to be a combination of items 13, 1 and 7. ( See Figure 6 ).

### *The Development of the Over-all Ranking*

In Figure 7 appear the caste hierarchies derived from the responses of the eighteen informants to the six items above. ( One informant, the Chamar boy, was not asked item 13. In his case item 19 was substituted for item 13. ) On the left side of the page is the final over-all hierarchy based on the comparison of the eighteen informants' rankings.

To have had a *perfectly* consistent over-all ranking, all eighteen respondents should have given the same castes the same scores. This was not the case. Individuals varied in the combinations of castes given each score. The way in which it was possible to develop an over-all ranking which was consistent with, though not identical for all eighteen hierarchies was to focus upon the *cutting points* in the scorings, the points in a hierarchy where the score of '6' ended '5' began, where '5' ended and '4' began, and so on. Rankings were made on the basis of differentiations which were a function of the cutting points ( the cutting points are indicated in Figure 7 by the underlines in each respondent's column. )

To illustrate how a decision on ranking was made, let us compare the Merchants and Goldsmiths. Twelve informants considered Merchants and Goldsmiths to be equal. They gave the two castes the same Ritual Distance scores. Four individuals, however, gave the two castes different scores. All four of these gave the Merchants the high score. We may assume further that the two Merchant informants whose cutting points come at their own caste's rank would have given their own caste the higher score. So it is on the basis of six individuals' differentiations that Merchants are ranked higher than Goldsmiths.

By this method of comparison of all pairs of castes, there emerged the ranking in the left column. No caste was

FIGURE 7  
*Scoring and Ranking of Fifteen Castes for Ritual Distance*  
Eighteen Hindu Village Respondents

Castes in Overall Over-all Ranking	Number of Respondents Placing It above the Following Caste (N=18)	F-40	M-20	M-22	M-17	M-45	F-30	F-40	M-15	F-58	F-33	M-30	F-27	M-19	F-55	F-30	F-21	M-17	M-18
		Brahman	Brahman	Rajput	Merchant	Merchant	Geneal.	Barber	Water-car.	Water-car.	Water-car.	Washer	Carp.	Carp.	Potter	Chamar	Sweeper	Chamar	
Brahman	1	...	...	6•	6	6	6	6•	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Rajput	1	6	6	..	6	6	6	—	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6
Merchant	6	6	6	6	...	...	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6
Goldsmith	7	5	6	6	5	5	5	—	6	5	5-6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6
Genealogist	3	5	5	6	5	5	...	5	5	4	...	6	[4]	4	[4]	5	...	6	...
Barber	3	5	5	4	5	4-5	5	...	5	4	4-5	6	5	4	5	[3-4]	6	6	6
Water-carrier	7	5	5	4	[4-5]	4	5	4	...	...	...	5	5	4	5	4	6	6	[5-6]
Grainparcher	6	3	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	[5]	4	5	4	3	4	4	5	6	6
Shepherd	12	3	5	4	3	4	3	4	5	[2]	2	4	3	3	3	4	5	6	4
Muslim Rajput	9	1	3	2	2	3-4	[2]	2	2	2-3	[3-4]	3	3	0	3	2	2-3	6	4
Oilpresser	6	1	2	[4]	2	1-2	3	2	2	0-2	1	3	2	0	2	1	1	4	1
Beggar	12	1	1	2	1	0-1	2	[3]	[3]	1	1	2	2	0	2	0	[0]	4	1
Shoemaker	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	[4]	4	[2-3]
Chamar	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	...	4	...
Sweeper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	[1]	1	—	1

Underlines show cutting points.  
Brackets show responses deviant from the over-all ranking.

included in this final hierarchy upon whose rank as given here more than three respondents disagreed. The Genealogists, Shepherds, Water-carriers, Muslim Rajputs and Shoemakers are castes on each of which two informants deviated from the over-all rankings given here. The Mirasis are the one caste on whose ranking three informants deviated. Two or three disagreements seemed small in number, for even with these, any particular ranking remained consistent with the rankings of more than four-fifths of the informants. (The standard of four-fifths agreement is, of course, an arbitrary one.)

### *Intervals of Ritual Distance*

The number of respondents placing each caste higher than the caste next below it is given in the second column of Figure 7. The numbers in this column make it possible to distinguish larger and smaller intervals of ritual distance. For example, only one person among these interviewees ranks the Brahmins above the Rajputs, while only one person rates the Rajputs above the Merchants. Singular differentiations such as these would suggest that these castes are just about equal in rank as measured by this particular Ritual Distance Scale. The intervals of ritual distance among them are small.

A larger number of differentiations in rank made by the interviewees would suggest a widely shared perception among the villagers of a definite gulf separating contiguous castes. On the basis of the numbers of differentiations made in these interviews, we may infer that the major blocks of castes perceived in Khalapur are the clean Hindu castes, the Muslim castes, and the untouchable castes. The number of respondents separating the lowest clean Hindu caste, the Shepherds, from the highest Muslim caste, the Muslim Rajputs, is twelve. The number differentiating the lowest Muslim caste, the Mirasis, from the highest untouchable caste, the Shoemakers, is twelve. It is noteworthy that there is no such well-agreed break between a block of 'twice-born' castes at the top and Shudra, or servant castes, in the middle of the hierarchy. The aristocracy of Khalapur is not well marked, at least by this

method of differentiation. Exact measurement would require more responses.

### *Sensitivity to Pollution*

Both the ordering of actions indicating ritual distance and the ritual hierarchy of castes appear to be almost identical for these eighteen villagers. But sensitivity of pollution, or the perceived degree of pollution in various actions, varies from individual to individual. Such variations among individuals in permissiveness or strictness regarding pollution and purity may relate to such factors as caste membership, contacts with members of other castes, age, sex and education. Again, with a larger number of interviews, the systematic effects of such factors could be studied.

### *Unranked Castes*

The seven castes which it was not possible to rank, given the requirement that there must be four-fifths' agreement on each ranking, are of two kinds. First, there are those whose approximate positions in the hierarchy can be located quite accurately: the Chamar Weavers, whom most respondents placed either above, equal to, or below the three Muslim castes; the Potters, whom most respondents placed above, equal to or below the Grainparchers; and the Washermen, whom most respondents placed above, equal to or below the Shepherds.

Secondly, there are the castes which have marked religious identification: the Kabir Panthi Weavers, the Jogis, the Gosains and the Carpenters (who style themselves 'Dhīman Brahmans'). Their positions are less easily located. We would hypothesize that these castes are ranked high by respondents who take the religious identification more seriously than others do. That the Jogis' begging practices cause them to be looked down upon is suggested by spontaneous comments made by four of the interviewees (Merchant M-45, Merchant M-17, Water-carrier M-15, Brahman F-40). The young Merchant, for example, said that he would not allow Jogis to sit on his cot 'because they are a

begging class'. High regard for the Gosaius is suggested by the Merchant M-45 who said, 'They are *swāmījīs* (spiritual preceptors).'

It is interesting that in a study of caste ranking among Muslims in a village near Khalapur, Gupta found the same kind of uncertainty about some of the Muslim castes with a religious identification (Gupta 1956). Marriott also mentions religious claims and occupations as sources of diffuseness (Marriott 1957).

The latter type of deviant caste suggests that, optimally, this method of ritual ranking might locate those castes which are socially mobile in the caste hierarchy, including those castes undergoing the process of 'Sanskritization' (Srinivas 1956). Such castes would be located by the lack of consensus about their positions.

### *The Single Informant and the Caste Hierarchy*

The caste hierarchy we have been able to develop for village Khalapur is based upon rankings in terms of specific items of hypothetical action, the ordinal relations among which are agreed upon by the eighteen respondents. It should be emphasized that while the final over-all ranking is fairly consistent with all respondents' rankings, it cannot be derived from any one individual's ranking. It is only by the superimposition of many individual rankings one upon another that the over-all hierarchy may be developed. This does not necessarily mean that no individual in the village would have conscious control of all the differentiations entering into the final hierarchy. Our method, after all, allows the individual to divide all castes into only seven categories (scores from '6' to '0'). However, the question of whether any single informant would grasp the whole hierarchy is worth consideration. Is it only through the addition of the partial perceptions of informants from different *loci* in the hierarchy that the whole picture may be fitted together?

### *Advantages of the Scaling Method*

In conclusion, I would like to suggest some of the advantages of this method of studying caste ranking.

(1) A first advantage is the control which this method makes possible to the investigator over the criteria for ranking, both as stimuli in the interview situation and later, in the unambiguous meanings of scores and ranks.

(2) The scaling technique is a means of systematizing responses from many informants according to an objective test for consensus. Judgment regarding consensus is not dependent upon the impressions of the field investigator or of a few key village informants. And not only is consensus clearly revealed, but lack of consensus is revealed and pin-pointed in this case, both in the hierarchy of actions symbolizing relative status and in the ranking of each of the castes. On the basis of the perceived differentiations in the ranks of different castes, this method for elucidating evidence from informants may be a means of answering at least in part the question : Are there classes of castes of equal rank or is there a tendency for each caste to have a different rank ?

(3) If other criteria for ranking are developed into scales, this technique promises some answers to the question of correlation *between* caste rankings according to *different* criteria. If the caste hierarchy in any particular village is a single unitary hierarchy, the scales of items used as status measures for different criteria may 'scale together' to form a single scale, and derivable from this single scale would be a single ranking for each caste.

(4) This method can take into account individual or role-based differences in ranking between members of the same caste. Both Srinivas (1955) and Guha and Kaul (1954) have pointed out sex differences in sensitivity to proximity to other castes. With the scaling method, we may locate individual and role-based differences. We need not talk in terms of the customs of a whole caste, how caste A interacts with caste B, but may speak of the younger women of caste A in contrast to the young men, the older women and the older men. This is true where the scaling is found to exist in social reality, because variations in sensitivity to pollution do not affect the ranking of castes or of items indexing the values upon which ranks are based.

(5) Lastly, such control makes objective replication feasible both at different times in the same village and for comparisons between villages in the same region. Because of the objectivity of the method, such replications may be done by different investigators. In the future, the technique might even be useful for tracing changes in caste hierarchy.

### *Summary*

This preliminary analysis of the scale-pictures and rankings of castes, derived from the two hundred and seventy-three responses to the Ritual Distance Interview by eighteen persons, suggests that there are implicit in the cultural ideology of caste, uniformities and regularities in both criteria for ritual ranking and in the ritual rankings themselves as shown by the high degree of consensus among the informants. Both the ways in which the ritual hierarchy described here relates to caste ranking based on other criteria and how it relates to the context of daily interpersonal relationships needs investigation. However, if the ideal pattern of ritual relationships is well defined, it should be possible to study the deviations from the ideal more effectively.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is a revised version of a paper read at the fifty-seventh annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, November 1958, as part of the symposium : Caste in India.

This report is based upon a ritual distance study undertaken during the winter of 1955-56 in Khälapur, a village in northwestern Uttar Pradesh, where I carried on field research for sixteen months between October, 1954 and May, 1956 as a post-doctoral fellow of the Cornell University India Program. Analysis of data during 1957-58 was made possible by a grant from the American Philosophical Society. For help on the ritual distance study I owe special thanks to Miss Usha Bhagat and Miss Saubhagya Taneja who were interviewers, and to Dr. John Gumperz a linguist, who helped Miss Bhagat and me frame the interview schedule. I should also thank Mr. J. Michael Mahar and Dr. McKim Marriott who encouraged me to analyse these particular data. Dr. Marriott also raised many basic and provocative questions about them. Edward B. Harper, David Mandelbaum, Morris E. Opler, Martin Orans, James Silverberg and Wayne Thomson I should like to

thank for their many helpful criticisms and suggestions in response to the first draft of this manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> The studies Marriott reviewed included : Dube 1955a, 1955b ; Gupta 1956 ; Mandelbaum 1955 ; Mayer 1956 ; Ryan 1953 ; Srinivas 1955.

<sup>3</sup> This use of the word 'ritual' is akin to Durkheim's concept of the 'sacred' and to the Polynesian 'tabu'. Radcliffe-Brown explains : 'A ritual prohibition is a rule of behaviour which is associated with a belief that an infraction will result in an undesirable change in the ritual status of the person who fails to keep to the rule.' (1952 : 134-135).

<sup>4</sup> Stevenson (1954 : 47) says : '...one thing seems certain, that it is from ritual rather than secular status, and from group rather than person status, that the caste system derives its unique consistency and viability.' Stevenson reviews some of the proponents of this point of view. These include Hutton, Ketkar, Sarat Chandra Roy, Ghurye and Srinivas. M. N. Srinivas, for example has said (1952 : 26) : 'This concept (of pollution) is absolutely fundamental to the caste system, and along with the concepts of *Karma* and *dharma* it contributes to make caste the unique institution it is.' In comparing caste in Africa and India, S. F. Nadel (1954 : 22) has concluded : 'In Bharat India the conception of spiritual purity and perfection dominates the picture, so that caste differentiation in turn expresses the ideas of pollution, contagion, and segregation between people of different degrees of perfection. In Africa the dominant conception is more pragmatic and in a sense materialistic.'

<sup>5</sup> For a summary of the studies of 'social distance' in the United States, see Simpson and Yinger 1953 : 135-140. The uniformity in the ranking of nationality groups in the United States in different places and at different times may inspire any student of the Indian caste hierarchy. For another study in India using the Bogardus 'social distance' scale, see Guha and Kaul 1954.

#### REFERENCES

- Blunt, E. A. H.  
 1931 Commensal and Other Restrictions of Caste, Ch. 5 in *The Caste System of Northern India*. Madras, Oxford University Press.
- Bogardus, Emory S.  
 1928 *Immigration and Race Attitudes*. New York, D. C. Heath.
- Dube, S. C.  
 1955a *Indian Village*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.  
 1955b Ranking of Castes in Telangana Villages. *Eastern Anthropologist* 8 : 182-190.
- Guha, U. and M. N. Kaul  
 1954 A Group Distance Study of the Castes of U. P. *Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology* (Government of India) 2.
- Gupta, Raghuraj  
 1956 Caste Ranking and Inter-Caste Relations Among the Muslims of a Village in North Western U. P. *Eastern Anthropologist* 10 : 30-42.

- Guttman, Louis  
 1944 A Basis for Scaling Qualitative Data. *American Sociological Review* 9 : 139-150.
- Mandelbaum, David  
 1955 The World and World View of the Kota. In McKim Marriott (ed.), *Village India* : 223-254. American Anthropological Association, Vo. 57, No. 3, Part 2, Memoir No. 83.
- Marriott, McKim  
 1957 A Technique for the Study of Caste Ranking in South Asia. Read at the Fifty-sixth Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, December, 1957.
- Mayer, Adrian  
 1956 Some Hierarchical Aspects of Caste. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 12 : 117-144.
- Nadel, S. F.  
 1954 Caste and Government in Primitive Society. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, New Series 8 : 9-22.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R.  
 1952 Taboo. In *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press.
- Riley, Matilda, James Riley, Jackson Toby et al.  
 1954 *Sociological Studies in Scale Analysis*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press.
- Ryan, Bryce F.  
 1953 *Caste in Modern Ceylon*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press.
- Simpson, George E. and J. Milton Yinger  
 1953 *Racial and Cultural Minorities*. New York, Harper.
- Srinivas, M. N.  
 1952 *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*. London, Oxford University Press.  
 1955 The Social System of a Mysore Village. In McKim Marriott (ed.), *Village India* : 1-35. American Anthropological Association, Vol. 57, No. 3, Part 2, Memoir No. 83.  
 1956 A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization. *Far Eastern Quarterly* 15 : 481-496.
- Stevenson, H. N. C.  
 1954 Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, Part 1 and 2 : 45-65.
- Stouffer, Samuel and Louis Guttman, et al  
 1950 *Measurement and Prediction*. Vol. IV of *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*, Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press.

## CASTE-ASCRIBED 'STATUS' VERSUS CASTE-IRRELEVANT ROLES\*

by JAMES SILVERBERG

THIS paper questions the assumption that caste membership ascribes status by scrutinizing the 'caste-relevancy' of various Indian peasant roles. It reports a trial examination, still in progress, of caste 'status' in the light of role inconsistencies within single castes and role duplication between castes, as observed in 1950 in the West Gujarat village, 'Kasandra'. It may demonstrate the usefulness of the role concept—role being taken as an assemblage of expected behavior patterns, whether these are interactional or attributional—in the analysis and write-up of Indian village community data.<sup>1</sup>

This is not a caste-ranking evaluation paper, although a further dimension of this research approach may provide a technique for assessing so-called objective rank.<sup>2</sup> Ranking the different alternative roles that define behavior for the name area of life-activity—ranking the behavior patterns that may be alternatively expected of an individual in any one institutional context—should, I feel, be subsequent to identifying the roles themselves. Here, where it seems necessary or useful to indicate generalized rank differences between the Kasandra castes mentioned in this paper, I adopt provisionally an unrefined and generally agreed upon self-evaluation of their ritual hierarchy.

Two related, sometimes combined, views are very common in sociological literature on Indian castes: (1) that caste

---

Mr. James Silverberg is assistant professor of anthropology in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His field has included research in Gujarat, Western Uttar Pradesh, and Venezuela

\* Presented at the 'Caste in India' Symposium at the 57th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D. C., November 21, 1958. The ethnographic data utilized in this trial examination progress report were gathered during 1950 in the Gujarat village of 'Kasandra' when the author was assisting Mrs. Gittel P. Steed, Director of Columbia University Research in Contemporary India Field Project. See Steed (1955).

corresponds in reality with what is an allegedly useful constructed type, the frozen social class; (2) that birth in a particular caste ascribes for every individual Hindu his status—an undefined and presumably generic status—which is ranked relative to other caste-ascribed statuses in a regional or India-wide system. Both views, separately or taken together, are very much alive as cursory examination of the latest anthropological and sociological text-book definitions demonstrates.

'Caste is the result of intensification of the class principle. It is the freezing of social classes by means of endogamy and hereditarily ascribed status.' (Hoebel 1958 : 425).<sup>3</sup>

'Caste is a system of stratification in which mobility, movement up and down the status ladder, at least ideally may not occur. A person's ascribed status is his lifetime status. Birth determines one's occupation, place of residence, style of life, personal associates, and the group from among whom one must find a mate.' (Green 1956 : 192).<sup>4</sup>

Fieldwork in peasant India has led many anthropologists to reject these notions and to concentrate on developing an adequate methodology and theory for caste ranking.<sup>5</sup> They deny that caste is a *frozen* version of social class by showing how rank-order is itself a variable to be scrutinized. They deny that caste ascribes a single *generic* status to each individual, either by isolating as a research focus some particular kind of status, usually 'ritual status' or by proclaiming that rank-orders are multiple and that they stem from analytically separable institutions, as in Srinivas' concept of the 'dominant caste' (1955 : 17; 1957).<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, they continue to perceive the corporate caste as the locus of status. Their approach is that statuses vary with caste membership and that so, consequently, do different institutional roles. In short, though they demand specification of the particular status in question which caste membership ascribes, they maintain the view that caste ascribes status and this determines their approach to caste ranking.

Now, one can indeed take *caste membership* as the primary focus of peasant Indian research and proceed to interpret, to present, all behavioral data from a village as a reflection of caste membership. But in looking for and later describing categories such as 'the *Brahmin's* ritual role,' 'the *Brahmin's* social role,' 'the *Rajput's* ritual role,' 'the *Rajput's* economic role,' and in doing this for each caste within any village studied, the relation between the data gathered and the perception employed may involve merely the working out of another self-fulfilling prophecy in scientific research. Observing and later presenting village behavior as a set of characteristic interactions between members of specific castes in each case, may ignore the extent to which the very same type of reciprocal relationship extends actually well beyond the castes referred to. Put another way, the approach tends to stereotype behavior for members of any caste by assuming that all roles are caste-relevant. This may provide analytical procedures which permit the ranking of castes in terms of ritual, economic, political, social, and other criteria, but it is accomplished without examining the caste-relevancy of these roles—that is, the extent to which ritual, economic, political, social, and other roles are consistent, both by inclusion and by exclusion, with caste membership.

Much social interaction in the Indian peasant community, however, is not merely nor even principally intercaste behavior. By way of contrast, then, it is equally possible to start with the identification of all the *roles* played by the inhabitants of a village community, and then to examine (1) the extent to which each caste is characterized by *multiple roles* which are inconsistent—that is, which are alternatives for the same institutional context that cannot be performed simultaneously by the same individual at the same period of his life. These might be termed *semicaste roles* or *part-caste roles*; (2) the extent to which the roles are *polycaste roles*—(a) where cross-caste duplication exists in the performance of the role itself, or (b) where two instances or more of the performance of the very same role involve interaction with members of two different castes (or more). The research in

progress reported on here considers only those roles that were sampled in the 1950 behavior of different members of a single Kasandra village caste, the *Koli-Patels*. Time will only permit me to present a limited series of even these multiple and inconsistent rôles, instances of duplication of these '*Koli* roles' in the expected behavior of members of other castes generally regarded as ritually either higher or lower, and, where significant, the plurality of castes with whom *Kolis* interacted in performing each of their various roles.

The most conspicuous activities in which *Koli-Patels* played 'caste-irrelevant' or 'caste-discrepant' roles—roles not coincident with caste membership—were those of economic production. All *Koli-Patels* were subjects of either of two patrilineages of *Vaghela-Rajput* landlords, the rulers of Kasandra. They were invited to and remained in the village on the favorable disposition of these *Vaghelas*; they constructed their houses and did agriculture-related work on *Vaghela* lands. The same *Vaghelas* could require their *Koli-Patel* vassals to perform 'forced labor', till around 1950, such as to run petty errands, to serve as guardians or escorts, especially for the rulers' womenfolk, during trips to and from Kasandra visiting relatives, making pilgrimages, attending fairs, and purchasing livestock, to act as 'Village policemen' or 'Government servants', etc. In return for such services, the *Vaghelas* could reward their *Koli-Patel* subjects with payments in kind, including gifts of rent-free land that the latter would, where possible, cultivate.

The role of subject or vassal—of course, a political and social as well as an economic role—was caste-irrelevant in that it was a 'polycaste role', duplicated in most Kasandra castes. It applied in a very general sense to all villagers from all castes, except the *Vaghelas* themselves, of course, and the former village-owners, *Jhala-Rajputs*, who cultivated remnants, often heavily mortgaged, of their once extensive lands. It applied in the most specific form of vassals engaged directly in agriculture or subject to forced labor or both, to members of castes as divergent from the *Koli-Patels* as the non-landowning cultivators of seven castes identified locally as

*Rajputs* (to distinguish them from the two landowning *Rajput* castes), Barbers, Potters, and various untouchable castes. The significance of this primary role bifurcation of Kasandra villagers into owner-rulers and subject vassals—corresponding to gross, Marxian classes with their emphasis on roles related to the means of (agricultural) production—will emerge in later discussion of at least one form of ritual interaction in Kasandra.

As regards more specific productive roles, some *Koli-Patels* in 1950 were share-cropping tenant-cultivators, some were semi-permanent farm servants (*sāthi* or *hāthi*), and others were wage-laborers (*dādiyā*) paid by the time worked (usually by the day) or by the task as variously measured (number of maunds of grain harvested or threshed, or number of hectares of land sowed, or cultivated, or plowed, etc.). These productive activity roles were caste-irrelevant by each of the three criteria I am distinguishing in the examination of role/caste consistency.

(1) They could not be performed simultaneously and were clearly conceptualized by the villagers as distinctive roles. Incidentally—to hint further at an already mentioned additional dimension facilitated by this research approach—these multiple, alternative roles were even implicitly ranked by the villagers relative to one another. Here, however, my concern is with the minimal fact that the roles were distinctive and that different members of the single *Koli-Patel* caste performed each of them, some individuals alternating the performance of each role successively during their life-times. To dramatize such role-inconsistency, some *Koli-Patels* were wage-labourers while other members of the very same caste were, as tenant-cultivators, the employers of exactly the same type of wage-labourer.

If 'caste-irrelevancy' were only exemplified by such role-multiplicity within a single caste, little would be gained by the approach I am advocating. Multiple semicaste productive roles could easily be comprehended by the mere definition of *Koli-Patel* 'economic status' as one involving a series of alternative roles—the ones identified above. To what extent,

then, were these roles caste-irrelevant also because they were polycaste roles ?

(2) Members of many other castes duplicated *Koli-Patel* performance in these very same roles :

(a) As share-cropping tenant-cultivators, most *Rajputs*, the temple *Sadhus*, Potters, and so on down the ritual hierarchy to include various members of untouchable castes ;

(b) As farm-servants, *Rajputs* as well as *Kolis*, and, indeed, villagers from almost any castes, usually where they were not themselves cultivating on tenancy, although in one case, for example, a Barber widow considered the temple *Sadhus* her 'farm servants' since they cultivated lands she held but could not herself work, in addition to their own extensive tenancy holdings. Furthermore, an ironical usage of the Gujarati term for farm-servant (*hāthī*), whereby the category included work-associates in cooperative work-exchanges, was applied to role performance by Potters and untouchables as well as by various *Kolis* ;

(c) As casual laborers, for example, a *Koli-Patel* cultivator himself was an employer of *Rajput* women for cotton-picking, and, at least in non-agricultural tasks, not only were *Koli-Patels* contracted for as casual laborers, but also members of such castes as the *Vāghris* and the untouchable *Shenmās*.

(3) Performance of these roles also involved interaction with members of diverse castes. Although tenancy-cultivation involved interaction only with *Vaghela-Rajputs* to whose lineage their own house-holds were attached, individual *Koli-Patels* could interact as semi-permanent farm-servants with *Vaghelas* of either lineage and also with such other castemen as Herds-men and Barbers. Furthermore, casual labor was performed for almost any villager by *Kolis*, including *Vaghelas* of either lineage, *Jhala-Rajputs*, various *Rajputs*, Herds-men, Potters, the temple *Sadhus*, and even for one another.<sup>7</sup> Role alternatives in certain other economic activity contexts—service exchanges<sup>8</sup>; property ownership, display and disposal<sup>9</sup>—seemed to follow or accompany the primary productive role alternatives of tenant-cultivators versus non-farmers already delineated.

To sample a non-economic activity briefly in the same fashion, examining its coincidence with caste membership by inclusion and by exclusion, I take up the role of the devout person or devotee (*bhagat*). Now *Koli-Patels* (together with other *Kolis* and with *Vāghrīs*) tended to be stereotyped as 'wild' or 'jungly', ghost-ridden, thievish, dishonest meat-eaters<sup>10</sup>, snake-killers<sup>11</sup>, etc. There is no need here to discuss the sources of such stereotypes nor their degree of validity. What is of concern is that *Koli-Patel* roles as participants in the broader traditions of Hinduism were multiple, diverse and inconsistent.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, despite such stereotypes, there were several individual *Koli-Patels* known and socially identified throughout Kasandra as devotees. The suffix '*bhagat*' was regularly affixed to the name of one *Koli-Pagi*—this only emphasizes the point since they were ritually lower than *Koli-Patels*—just as it was to that of a *Vaghelā-Rājput*, and occasionally to the names of other *Kolis*. This the role of recognized devotee, though perhaps characterized by different shadings of form and function for different individuals, was caste-irrelevant. Nor was it the behavior of a truly ascribed status. Rather, it was a role appropriate to a status acquired during the life times of individual members of 'clean' castes at highly diverse levels in the ritual hierarchy.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, certain cases of ritual interaction, when examined in this fashion, turn out to be behavioral patterns appropriate to caste-irrelevant social roles. Inattention to this possibility might lead a social scientist to employ them as indices of caste ranking on the assumption that every role ascribed to an individual for each aspect of his life is equally a consequence of his caste membership and that it differs from the role he would be expected to play were he to be from a different caste. In Kasandra, one way of showing respect to a 'greater person' was through deferential sitting—sitting lower than he or, perhaps, standing up as he passed by. However, unlike many ritual acts in Kasandra, deferential sitting did not follow caste lines up and down the ritual hierarchy, did not express for each caste subordinating behavior towards castes ranked as

ritually higher in one direction and superordinating behavior towards those ranked as ritually lower in the other direction.<sup>14</sup> Rather, a careful analysis of villagers' statements—ideal versions of sitting behavior—and of actually observed sitting behavior, reveals that 'great persons' were of two possible types in any situation. One defined in terms of socio-economic power and influence, comprised the ruling *Vaghelā-Rājputs*, but also *amaldārs* and other important official visitors ; it was a category that tended to reflect the class dichotomy alluded to earlier of village-owners (plus their power equal at least, from the broader society) versus village vassals. 'Greater persons' could also be older persons, so that age-prestige could call forth ritualized deferential behavior too.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the social role that comprehended this behavior pattern, it was polycaste, and for example, even a *Brahmin* adolescent would be seen deferring to an adolescent *Vaghelā-Rājput*. In such cases of ritual interaction, then the behavioral pattern turns out to be not *caste*-relevant, but *class*-relevant ritual interaction, along the lines of the fundamental distinction already summarized dichotomizing village-owners and their village vassals, (or it turns out occasionally to be age-status-relevant behavior).<sup>16</sup>

Having sampled some *Koli-Patel* roles with reference to their *caste*-relevancy, I am suggesting that the role concept is useful in the analysis and presentation of Indian village field data. I have admittedly stacked my cards, insofar as incomplete analysis permits selectivity, on the side of *caste*-irrelevant roles. Many roles could, of course, be described which were consistent with *Koli-Patel* caste membership, both inclusively and exclusively. Some papers presented in this symposium and previously have focussed on precisely such behavior.<sup>17</sup>

It should be superfluous for me to note that the approach I am suggesting in this paper in no way is intended to imply that castes are inoperative or unimportant in Indian village life. The role concept is a tool which helps more sharply to discriminate between behavior that is *caste*-relevant and that which is not—*class*-relevant behavior, for example. The

approach is of use therefore in combating the notion that caste is some form of class, that caste is in the same continuum of social forms that includes class. In rejecting this notion, perhaps it is necessary to indicate what castes seem to me to be. I would take the preliminary position that castes (at least in West Gujarat) are fundamentally corporate kinship groups, predominantly endogamous themselves though characterized by local (village) and lineage exogamy. Their interactions are strongly circumscribed by traditions, often local, of ritual rank which tend to reflect the socio-economic power relationships of the class-structured social system in which they operate. In sum, I would urge a definition of caste that is consistent with Marriott's case for interaction as the basis for ranking (1958), with Aberle's stress on the power component that is evident in the crucial types of interaction she refers to as 'relationships of servitude' (1958), and with Orans' citations of instances of power-wielding and rank-jumping by caste or tribal segments (1958).

It is felt that the type of analysis basic to this progress report, which starts and concerns itself initially with the identification of the various economic, political, social, religious and perhaps other roles played by individuals in a peasant community that is also caste-segmented—and perhaps later concerns itself with the differential ranking of alternative roles—will aid us in the following ways :

(1) in sharpening our understanding of castes and caste systems and in revising the definitions of these terms as they currently appear in sociological literature (e. g., the misleadingly simplified generalization that 'caste ascribes status'), perhaps if only by identifying those roles which indeed *are* more precisely coincident with, and hence relevant to, caste membership ;

(2) in giving a more balanced perspective to the place of caste in the social interaction of Indian villages and one that is less dominated by the intellectual structuring of western sociologists preoccupied with caste as an unfamiliar social phenomenon ;

(3) in providing a focus, all important in terms of current and future political developments in India and the understanding of social change there, for assessing, on the basis of the functional significance of polycaste roles, the relative effectiveness of CLASS versus CASTE as an index of behavioral differences and as the locus of shared sentiment and group solidarity ;

(4) in indicating the lines of cleavage within certain castes, corresponding to the important semicaste multiple role alternatives that are mutually inconsistent, which—it might be hypothesized—in a culture whose world-view so strongly emphasizes stereotyping and categorizing of behavioral variations, may give rise to caste fragmentation and the creation of new castes ;

(5) in providing an analytical perspective that may facilitate comparison of behavior studied in diverse Indian peasant communities ; and specifically in this regard,

(6) in working out the determinants of caste rank positions that are not dependent upon self-evaluative criteria alone, by comparing, perhaps among other indices, the frequencies with which each alternative role is performed within each caste ;<sup>18</sup>

(7) in developing hypotheses to explain the inconsistencies in self-evaluations of caste-ranking, noted by various investigators— inconsistencies in the rank-orders of castes as evaluated by different individual members of the same village caste system and inconsistencies between the 'averaged' rank-order responses of nearby villages—by identifying which roles may be uppermost in the minds of different Indian villagers when they respond to the social scientist's request that they 'rank the castes' ;<sup>19</sup> and, finally,

(8) in formulating the significant variables entering into an analytical scheme for predicting change in the general rank-order of particular castes on the basis of currently emerging or growing role inconsistencies.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The concept 'role' here refers to an assemblage of patterned ways of behaving that may be expected of an individual in a particular institutional context, whether or not this involves reciprocity in some recurrent social interaction as it did in Linton's famous definition of 'status' and, by implication, of 'role' (1936 : 113). To indicate this broader definition, I am borrowing from Marriott's presentation in today's symposium the terms 'interactional' and 'attributional' which refer to both types of behavior patterns (1958). Furthermore whether role behavior becomes appropriate for the individual as he automatically passes through successive phases of his life cycle from birth on, or is performed as an expression of his own personality, it must have meaning for and (usually) be sanctioned by his 'society' if a role is to be distinguished from unique and idiosyncratic behavior on the part of some unusual individual. To avoid reifying 'society' in the definition of role, I would follow Merton (1949 : 34) in pointing to differences in the meaning and the degree of acceptability of the behavior patterns making up any role for different social units within an Indian peasant community, and, in particular, for powerful subgroups possessed of the means to manipulate the broader society through coercion or persuasion.

<sup>2</sup> The most insistent common denominator between Marriott's self-evaluation technique for caste ranking reported on last year (1957) and the comments offered by Peter Rossi and myself as discussants, was that criteria for, and a methodology of, objective caste ranking are the scientific order of the day. At that time I called attention to recent restatements of the fact that the criteria for objective ranking developed by social scientists have, so far and at least in Western society, shown to be more reliable in predicting behavior and attitudes than has self-scaling.

<sup>3</sup> Another just published anthropological work says: 'CASTE : a class whose status is ascribed, i.e. with no competition, endogamous'. (Keesing 1958 : 427).

<sup>4</sup> Francis E. Merrill, citing Kingsley Davis, has the following in his widely used introductory sociology text as revised a year ago :

'(A caste is) a fixed class in a rigid social structure, in which rank is based largely upon hereditary, and hence more permanent, grounds. Members of a class receive their status at birth, but they may lose or alter that status by subsequent behavior. Members of a caste similarly receive their status at birth, but it ordinarily remains permanently fixed regardless of their later achievement' (1957 : 280). .

<sup>5</sup> Since drafting this paper I have come across a sociologist's rejection of traditional social science dogma on caste in 'Evidences of Disparity Between the Hindu Practice of Caste and the Ideal Type' (Pohlman 1951 : 375-379).

<sup>6</sup> See also Stevenson (1954 : 46).

<sup>7</sup> The commentary on productive roles could be rounded off with reference to a *Koli-Patel* tenant-cultivator in an entrepreneurial role. He established

and ran a tea-hotel subject to the competition only of a villager from the ritually much higher Merchant caste, who, at about the same time, began to prepare and sell tea at his near-by shop.

At least some of the caste-irrelevant productive roles I have been talking about are the equivalent of what Dr. Aberle has referred to as 'caste-free occupations' (1958 : 5).

<sup>8</sup> Even in the village service-exchanges which tended to be characterized more by caste-relevant roles in the form of traditional occupational specialization, the distinction between tenant-cultivator and non-farming *Koli-Patels* made for different behavior patterns in terms, for example, of the services sought, the means and methods of payment, and the like. Furthermore, role behavior differences could be identified in terms of a distinction between those service-exchange relationships that followed the common *Vaghela-Rajput* lineage-attachment of both specialist and service-recipient—a situation approximating the tidy version of Hindu *jajmani* systems with which we are familiar through the work of Wiser (1936) and others, and those which did not. Finally, role duplications were evident in these service activities even to the extent of *Kolis* occasionally performing specialist services, e.g. a *Koli-Pagi* (in this case) doing carpentry work for his *Koli-Patel* friend.

<sup>9</sup> *Koli-Patels* owned or occupied houses, to take one instance, which, in a classification of six fairly distinct categories ranked in order from most to least affluent, were of the fourth and fifth types. Thus, some *Koli-Patels* were occupants of what I will designate as type four: a raised single room, fronted by a raised and roofed porch, the latter being sometimes partly enclosed with a low wall, the entire dwelling arrangement having just a low thorn fence or no compound enclosure at all to shield it from a public village alley. This type of dwelling characterized a proprietary role that was caste-irrelevant in the sense that, not restricted to certain *Koli-Patels*, it was the type owned or occupied by most of the *Rajputs*, Herdsmen, the Barbers (renting from an emigrant Washerman), the Washerman himself, and most of the untouchables. Furthermore, it was caste-irrelevant because it was not consistently characteristic of all members of (for example) the *Koli-Patel* caste. Some others owned or occupied unraised, single rooms which were fronted by a closeable antechamber that often sheltered the household's livestock, if they had any; and this type of dwelling characterized a poly-caste proprietary role since it was also owned or occupied by some *Vaghris* and other villagers. Thus, no single dwelling type designated the property roles of *Koli-Patels* and the differentiation tended to accompany the productive role distinctions already cited between cultivating and non-farming *Kolis*. In general, *Koli-Patel* property—lands cultivated on tenancy, livestock, tools and implements, houses, furnishings, clothing and jewelry—were highly variable between members of that single caste. A crude correlation existed, as already indicated for house type, between more affluent versus more impoverished *Koli-Patels* as property owners and the distinction of tenant cultivator versus landless farm-servant or wage-laborer *Koli-Patels*. Moreover, these property roles were not set off from the mass of villagers

who were below the living standards of a grouping made up of most *Vaghela-Rajputs*, most *Jhala-Rajputs*, most Merchants, most *Brahmins*, the Carpenter, and some *Rajput*. The 'mosts' and 'some' in this statement should underline the lack of homogeneity among the members of those castes generally taken as having a more affluent property role. There were, for example, ill-kempt and impoverished appearing individuals among almost all the castes mentioned in this higher living standards group.

<sup>10</sup> It was true that most *Koli-Patels* were 'meat-eaters' although (a) the expensiveness of meat made its consumption by them virtually non-existent, and (b) such 'anti-Brahmanical' behavior was equally characteristic, perhaps more so, of many others in the village. As polycaste behavior it was conspicuously characteristic of most males in the ruling *Vaghela-Rajput* lineages who were the owners of this allegedly highly 'orthodox' (*shukar*) village, the agents of social control and guardians of orthodoxy, and whose very authority was cited by itinerant salesmen of shrimp as the reason for conducting their business on the village outskirts, in the *Koli-Patel* vicinity.

<sup>11</sup> It was true that some, perhaps most *Koli Patels* caught snakes and they may have even killed them, but it is most likely that other villagers caught and killed snakes found lurking at their houses. It is revealing, at any rate, that a *Koli-Patel* sought to borrow a snake-catching implement at the houses, in turn, of a *Brahmin* (!), a *Vaghela-Rajput*, and a *Koli-Pagi*.

<sup>12</sup> One of the most valuable contributions of the recent publication by Oscar Lewis lies in the documentation of individual variability, not only within an Indian village but within single castes, in terms of 'religiosity' 'practical, this-worldly' orientations in belief and associated practice (1958 : 252, 254-258).

<sup>13</sup> If roles as worshippers of family goddesses were to be distinguished in terms of the particular goddess worshipped—as one variant, at least—these too would be religious roles that were caste-irrelevant, since they were not inclusive of all families within the *Koli-Patel* caste nor exclusive of worshippers from other castes.

<sup>14</sup> Pocock, elaborating a view he attributes to Dumezil, refers to this as a dialectical process of inclusion and exclusion along caste lines up and down the ritual hierarchy in ritual interactions, a sort of Janus-headed process whereby caste C defers to caste B in the same fashion that B defers to caste A but not to C (1957 : 23, 28).

<sup>15</sup> The individual who might have been expected to show deference was able to manipulate these two determinants of prestige so as to play one against the other to his own convenience—choosing to recognize the pertinence of age-status as against that of power position or vice versa—probably with the tacit consent of the one to be deferred to perhaps an expression of the latter's personality. In any case, the latter could release the former from such display of respect. Thus, *Koli-Patel* men did not rise before a rather genial adolescent brother of the very *Vaghela-Rajput*, older by only a few years, towards whom they consistently manifested such deferential behavior. That age was not universally determinant here is indicated by the fact that

at the same time they and other villagers would single out a considerably younger *Vaghela*, a mere boy, as the object of their deferential behavior.

<sup>16</sup> To cite a few other examples of class-relevant deferential behavior, Barbers kept separate scissors, combs, and razors for 'greater persons', principally the village rulers (*Vaghela-Rajputs*); domestic servants of the rulers were expected to be bare-foot in their presence, although one Barber widow refused to defer in this manner and 'didn't care' that her relatives disapproved of her failure to properly perform in this class-relevant role.

Martin Orans cites how the political and economic power of a caste segment enabled it to manipulate certain ritual interactions with other castes to attain higher ritual status (1958). Such rank-jumping by caste segments may be one consequence of certain types of what I am identifying as *semicaste roles*.

<sup>17</sup> A notable example would be Pauline Mahar's paper, I would make bold to include as instances of inconsistency between caste membership and roles, the discrepancies in response she obtained from individual members of the same caste as to their ritual roles which she identifies as their variable sensitivity to pollution or the perceived degree of pollution and as their permissiveness versus strictness with regard to pollution and purity (1958).

<sup>18</sup> This becomes more important with castes that are numerous in any peasant community. Thus, perhaps even in India, the 'family is the unit of stratification' (Barber 1957 : 73), although given the nature of Indian peasant social structure we may sometimes have a unit that conveniently expands to include an entire localized lineage and, in some cases—especially in the smaller groupings and where occupational homogeneity exists—expands to include all the caste members present in the village under study.

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps momentary consideration of different roles by different informants and the fact that many roles are largely caste-irrelevant underlies what Marriott signalled as 'the disagreement, or dissensus (which) seems to be an essential characteristic of many South Asian systems of caste ranking' (1957 : 1).

#### REFERENCES

- Aberle, E. Kathleen Gough  
 1958 'Criteria of Caste Ranking in South India.' In this symposium.
- Barber, Bernard  
 1957 Social Stratification. New York, Harcourt, Brace.
- Green, Arnold W.  
 1956 Sociology, an Analysis of Life in Modern Society. 2d. ed. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Hoebel, E. Adamson  
 1958 Man in the Primitive World. 2d. ed. New York, McGraw-Hill.

- Keesing, Felix M.
- 1958 Cultural Anthropology. New York, Rinehart.
- Lewis, Oscar, with the assistance of Victor Barnouw
- 1958 Village Life in Northern India. Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
- Linton, Ralph
- 1936 The Study of Man. New York, Appleton Century-Crofts.
- Mahar, P. M.
- 1958 'A Multiple Scaling Technique for Caste Ranking.' In this symposium.
- Marriott, McKim
- 1957 'A Technique for the Study of Caste Ranking in South Asia.' Paper presented at 56th Annual Meeting, American Anthropological Association, Chicago, December 27, 1957. Manuscript.
- 1958 'Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking.' In this symposium.
- Merrill, Francis E.
- 1957 Society and Culture. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall.
- Merton, Robert K.
- 1949 Social Theory and Social Structure. Glencoe, Ill., Free Press.
- Orans, Martin
- 1958 'A Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition : the Emulation-Solidarity Conflict.' In this symposium.
- Pocock, David F.
- 1957 'Inclusion and Exclusion : a Process in the Caste System of Gujarat.' Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 13 : 19-31.
- Pohlman, Edward W.
- 1951 'Evidences of Disparity between the Hindu Practice of Caste and the Ideal Type.' American Sociological Review 16 : 375-379.
- Srinivas, M. N.
- 1955 'The Social System of a Mysore Village.' In Village India, ed. McKim Marriott, pp. 1-35. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- 1957 'Varna and Caste.' In Introduction to the Civilization of India : Changing Dimensions of Indian Society and Culture, pp. 270-276. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Steed, Gite P.
- 1955 'Notes on an Approach to a Study of Personality Formation in a Hindu Village in Gujarat.' In Village India, ed. McKim Marriott, pp. 102-144. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Stevenson, H. N. C.
- 1954 'Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System.' Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 84 : 45-65.
- Wiser, William H.
- 1936 The Hindu Jajmani System, Lucknow, Lucknow Publishing House,

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Myth of the Caste System.** By Narmadeshwar Prasad. 1957.  
Pp. iv & 319. Patna, Samjna Prakashan. Rs. 18.00

Prof. Narmadeshwar Prasad is angry with the caste system. 'Caste and backward economy', he says, 'have supported each other. Coupled together, these forces of social disorganisation have brought doom and disaster to India' (p. 124).

Prof. Prasad then tries to show how privileged groups created a 'myth' which was eventually perpetuated by religious indoctrination. 'That a vast majority of the Indians (particularly those who live in rural areas) accept the traditional view regarding the caste system, speaks volumes about the unqualified success of the myth-builders. Such a myth, as we have about Hindu castes, gets control over even the unconscious of the people. Science improves, history changes, philosophy develops, but myth knows no movement. And once it is established, it is much more powerful than truth or reason' (pp. 252-53).

The conclusion is finally reached that the privileged classes of Indian society tried to maintain themselves in their advantageous position by *subsequent* economic and political arrangements. Thus, 'The Indian caste system has been of the religio-mythical type. In recent times the Indian caste system has also acquired the economico-political traits ; that is to say that in the Indian caste system we have the combination of both types' (p. 248). This conclusion is supported by the argument that norms persist even when there have been economic changes, and even changes in people's mode of living.

The norm, and the 'myth' at its root, have so firmly gripped men's minds that reform movements in the past have been defeated by it ; so much so that converts to Islam and Christianity in India have failed to stamp out its last remnants even after conversion. The reason why this has been so is explained thus. 'It has been allowed to continue. Efforts have not been made to analyse the *caste system as a myth*. What is needed is a science of social dynamics and education in new values. Social revolution in India is long overdue' (p. 253).

The thesis that an idea or an educational system, unsupported by political authority, at least in North India for a long time, is capable of perpetuating a backward economy in disregard of material forces like a growing pressure of population, or an obvious inadequacy of an old productive organization even when better alternatives are available from the history and example of well-known countries, is one of great theoretical significance. If it true that a thought system can thus prevent economic progress when the demands of life make it urgent, then one can admit that the challenge must be directed against the 'myth' itself.

Obviously, Prof. Prasad's stand is anti-Marxian, and his main purpose in the present book, if the reviewer has understood him aright, has been to prove the hollowness of the Marxian theory of material determinism with the aid of social history in India. But, in spite of a praiseworthy amount of systematic endeavour, the reviewer is left with the feeling that the anti-Marxian case has not been very successfully established. The conclusion to which Prof. Prasad subscribes does not inevitably follow from his observations. There is a certain insufficiency of data, and of their depth-analysis. The thesis is moreover weakened by an obvious undercurrent of preference for a particular stand, which is the anti-thesis of the Marxian belief that the super-structure is almost wholly conditioned by the productive sub-structure. Both views can be equally dogmatic, although both may honestly spring from sincere desire to bring about progress and equality, even if each tries to seek justification for its hopes and righteous indignation in the pages of History, which is then written with a capital H.

Perhaps the time is not yet gone by when we may engage in more genuinely scientific study of caste, and of the several factors which have played their part variably in the course of its long history. Perhaps afterwards we may be able to suggest a more efficient remedy for the ills from which India has been suffering.

Even if prescription of a remedy may not be the first responsibility of a social scientist, a more correct understanding of the situation is undoubtedly his job. And here, one is likely to be led astray if emotions are allowed free play, even if they spring from noble ideals, as they undoubtedly do in the present instance, or in

the case of an author like Prof. M. N. Srinivas who is, with equal justification, distressed intensely over India's social backwardness.

Science perhaps thrives best after a sublimation of our sympathies in the direction of truth, which becomes more and more abstract, and less and less charged with immediate likes and dislikes. Abstraction is no sin ; it may even be desirable, although the urgency of reform and the sorrow of humanity may be great in the contemporary scene.

N. K. Bose

**We, The Tikopia—A Sociological Study of Kinship in Primitive Polynesia.** By Raymond Firth. With a Preface by Bronislaw Malinowski. Second Edition 1957. Pp. xxvi + 605, with Plates, Plans, Tables and Genealogies. London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 50 shillings.

This book, originally published in 1936, was one of the first of a series of field-work monographs by the pupils of the late Professor Malinowski. It appeared at a time when the Functionalist approach dominated social anthropology in Britain, and, in its turn, the book played a part in imparting to this approach an added vitality.

The Tikopia are a small island community of some 1200 souls living on the 'Polynesian fringe' of Melanesia. They show close cultural affinities with the Samoans and the Tongans, and, at the time of this study, were one of the five Polynesian communities to have been left more or less untouched by the influence of European culture. The Tikopia are described as having a simple economy of fishing and garden cultivation, the use of money being completely absent from their system of exchange. They have a system of patrilineal sibs, headed by chiefs having important and complementary ritual functions. Rank based upon birth and ritual status, has a part to play in the working of Tikopia society. The territorial divisions of Tikopia often cut across kinship groupings, although such groupings tend to be territorially localized. The major territorial cleavage was between the districts of Faea and Ravena, and this cleavage had been considerably deepened due to the adoption of Christianity by the people of Faea.

Professor Firth's primary concern is with an analysis of the kinship system of Tikopia. 'The book is a sociological analysis of

family life and kinship. However, kinship among the Tikopia is 'the articulating principle of social organisation,' and what emerges from the book is much more than a mere description of kinship forms. It is a picture of Tikopia social life in its most fundamental aspects.

The author begins by introducing us to the island community of Tikopia, describes the setting of Tikopia culture, and gives us an outline of the method and conditions of his field-work. Chapters IV and V give us detailed accounts of household and family and inter-personal relations within the family circle. The author presents an intimate account of the daily round of activities, and gives us a close-up view of family life as it is lived by the Tikopia. From here the extension of kinship is traced through the father and mother, and we are next shown how marriage brings into being new sets of relations with their corresponding functions. In all this Professors Firth's approach is clearly reminiscent of the 'biographical method' of kinship studies formulated by Malinowski in an article in *Man*, 1930. The structure of kinship terminology is set forward, but not with an undue elaboration. One feels that Professor Firth shares a little of Malinowski's impatience over what the latter used to speak of as 'kinship algebra'.

The corporate kinship groups of the Tikopia are described in a later chapter. The bilateral nature of kinship ties is clearly explained, although it is shown that primarily the Tikopia are a patrilineal people; the 'house' which in the Preface to the 2nd edition we are asked to read as lineage is a partitineal group. Some observations are made on rank, wealth and land tenure, showing their relation to the kinship system. The final chapters are devoted to description of childhood, adolescence and sex-life. The book is concluded with a discussion on the meaning of kinship in social life, and its role in the stability and perpetuation of a social system.

Although Professor Firth's *contribution* is a landmark in British social anthropology, it shows in many respects significant difference from the approach to kinship studies followed over the last two decades almost, by the majority of British social anthropologists under the aegis of the late Professor Radcliffe-Brown. Firth's preoccupation is with kinship behaviour as opposed to kinship structure. He studies kinship structure, and also describes kinship

behaviour. He has little use for abstract structural models, even as descriptive categories. He is not interested in giving us elaborate schematizations of the kinship system of Tikopia. He wants us to see this system as it is lived, with all the finer shades and nuances of real life situations. He realizes the distinction between formal and informal kinship behaviour, and tells us frankly that the latter are the more important. Not that this leads him to ignore the underlying principle, the structure of Tikopia kinship. But the question is one of emphasis, and to this extent there is a clear and recognizable difference between this type of approach, and the approach of the so-called structural anthropologists.

Andre Beteille

**Die Teda von Tibesti.** By Andreas Kronenberg. *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik, Band XII.* Wien, 1958.

The Teda inhabit the regions between Lake Chad, Ennedi, Kufra and the southern part of Central Fezzan in the Sahara desert. They are also known by the following names, Tuda, Toda, Tubu, Tebu, Tibbu, Gurian, Goran, Daza or Aza. Inspite of dialectical and cultural differences they show one common culture.

The Teda can be placed under three economic groups. One is semi-nomadic with herds of goat, sheep and donkey. They also practise gardening and live close to villages in circular stone houses, about 1 metre high and 1.5 metre in diameter. The second group is nomadic and the camel is the most important animal, while they possess besides large herds of sheep and goat. They also own date-palm trees individually. The third group practises hoe-cultivation which is dependent upon subsoil water in this great arid valley. It is worked with slave labour. The author is of opinion that semi-nomadism is the oldest form of economy and the three groups appear to be bound up with distinctive ethnic layers, which do not show any hierarchical order. According to the author, both the camel, which was probably brought to Tibesti by the Arne clan, and the date palm, probably introduced by the Arabs during the 7th-8th century, are later arrivals in the original semi-nomadic Teda culture. Certain forms of caste endogamy are also met with. Blacksmiths can only marry among themselves; so also slaves and

their descendants. A Teda can marry a slave, in which case the latter has to be declared free.

Marriage rules are rather strict. It is prohibited within seven generations from either parents. Cousin marriage is considered incestuous. As such the Teda has to go far and wide in search of mates; and this is supposed to have brought about a great uniformity in Teda culture.

The family is largely the nucleus of social and political life; while clan is also an important institution.

Double descent, i. e. descent through both the parents' clans is strongly remembered. Each clan has its own mark, used in the case of animals, which is inherited patrilineally. The Teda clans are not exogamous but there is an exogamy of blood relations.

The dead are buried. Above the burial a pile of stones is heaped up, on which a staff of date palm is raised in the form of an arch with one end of the staff towards the head and the other end towards the feet. The dead body is always taken out through a hole in the wall and never through the doorway.

The Teda appear to be associated with a megalithic cult since the stone circles, slabs and heaps serve as centres of Teda worship and sacrifice.

Summarising the earlier views on the origin of the Teda the author points out their close cultural affinity with the peoples of the south-east instead of the Berber and the Tuareg of the west.

There is an appendix on Teda games and oracles.

S. S. Sarkar

#### CORRECTION

On p. 80, Vol. 39, No. 1 of *Man in India* please read under item 6,

Sudhangsu Lajini Roy

in place of

Sudhangsu Nagini Roy

N. C. Sarkar

Manager, *Man in India*

## NOTICE

Subscribers whose dues are in arrears are requested kindly to remit their arrears and current subscription to the Manager, ~~W.A.D.~~, Man in India, 18 Church Road, Ranchi, Bihar, India, so that continuity of service may be maintained. Publications meant for exchange must be sent to the office of the journal at Ranchi.